THE PRINCESS OF ALASKA

BY RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE

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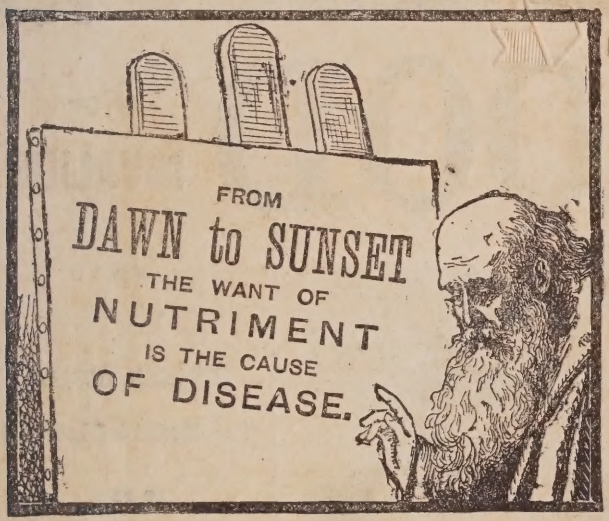

The most truly Living Body is the most active in Decay; the more bodily and mental vigour are displayed, the more quickly do the various tissues melt down into substances which are without delay removed by the excreting organs. *The more the Blacksmith Works his Arms and the Statesman his Brain,* the heavier bulk of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and hydrogen is thrown out by the lungs, liver, skin, and kidneys. Do they then wear them out by this constant friction and drain? No, no—the more the bricks are removed from the old wall, the more new bricks will a good builder put in; and so, provided that the supply is sufficient—that the builder *is* a good one—the more rapid the drain the newer and stronger and better the body will become.

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THE PRINCESS OF ALASKA.

THE PRINCESS OF ALASKA

A TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES

A Novel

BY

RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE

AUTHOR OF

"MY OFFICIAL WIFE," "THE LITTLE LADY OF LAGUNITAS,"
"PRINCE SCHAMYL'S WOOING," "THE MASKED VENUS,"
"DELILAH OF HARLEM," "THE PASSING SHOW,"
"FOR LIFE AND LOVE," "THE ANARCHIST"

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BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL
MANCHESTER AND NEW YORK
1894

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LONDON:
BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD., PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

WON SUDDEN FAME.

COLONEL SAVAGE AS AN AUTHOR.

After Many Years of Active Military Life He Discovers His Aptitude as a Story Writer—His Career as a Cadet and Soldier.

It is an odd coincidence that four lads who each occupied one of the four rooms on the ground floor of the first division of cadet barracks at West Point in the year of our Lord 1865, as cadets, should all become famous in the literary world, after having served their country gallantly.

In that year the big double room of the tower side was the home of the adjutant of the corps, whose nodding plumes and dignified bearing inspired awe in the heart of every "plebe." Across the hall dwelt a tall, dark cadet, with the stripes of a cadet corporal. In the room back of him a dark-eyed plebe lodged. Opposite dwelt another quiet plebe.

To-day the adjutant of the nodding plumes is known as Captain Charles King, the author of the most charming series of army stories extant. The cadet corporal is Colonel Richard Henry Savage, whose fascinating tales are sold by the thousands. The dark-eyed plebe is now John Brisben Walker, the brilliant editor and owner of the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, and the fourth is Arthur Sherburne Hardy, whose books have such a vogue. Incidentally it may be remarked that in 1865 the four were fast friends and are the same to-day.

In those days Dick Savage was the life of the barracks as he is to-day the idol of thousands of readers. He was a Utica boy who went to California with his parents in 1852, when but 6 years of age, went the rounds of the public schools, studied law, became enthusiastic over military life and was made the happy recipient of an appointment to West Point.

When Dick made his first appearance at the Point in 1864 that species of deviltry known as hazing was at its height. Officers were too badly needed at the front to spare many for the military academy, and many of these were invalids. The cadets accordingly had more leeway than they ever had before or since. It was into this nest of mischief that young Savage was introduced. Tall, dark, and solemn of countenance, shy and reserved, it was a rough plunge. But he went through like a thoroughbred, and with the June camp that transformed him from a plebe to a yearling, the biggest change of all the four years to a cadet, he sud-

denly sprung into prominence as the ringleader of all mischief and chief inquisitor of all the unfortunate plebes who made their first bow to Uncle Sam's school that year. It was mischief tempered with that jollity which gets the most fun out of a thing with little real harm. Even the victims enjoyed it as much as such unfortunates can enjoy anything of this nature.

Two days of "yearling June" had not passed before Dick Savage's reputation as a wit of the first order was made, never to be lost. With the dictionary at his tongue's end and a mind stored with quotation, never was there such fun as when he lassoed an unsuspecting plebe, who had wandered from the protecting walls of the Seventh and Eighth division barracks. Old-timers say that no matter what was going on the moment the word was passed around that Savage had another plebe everything was dropped and a rush made for the knot of gray and white where Dick was officiating as inquisitor-in-chief. Query after query as to the victim's past history and future expectations would be propounded with all the seriousness of an undertaker by the tall cadet until the crowd was in a gale of laughter in which the victim himself could not help joining in spite of the stern commands to keep silent. Camp Lincoln will long be remembered by the members for Savage's pranks.

Then, to the surprise of himself as well as everyone else, Dick was made a corporal, and the fun grew more uproarious. To hear him catechizing a sentry post discounted anything in the farce comedy line of to-day, as an electric light outclasses a tallow dip. His inventive genius was never at a loss for some new phase of innocent fun, but that which lingered longest in the memories of the cadets and which even to-day is never thought of without a laugh was "Savage's battery." The story of this wonderful organization is best given in the language of one of the denizens of that old first floor, as he related it to me. "In those days, no matter what corporal was in charge of the general police work of camp, Dick Savage got to be by common consent the almost invariable leader of the uproarious fun that followed The work was first thoroughly done, for he had almost the entire fourth class to draw upon, and was always thorough in what he did. Then came the spectacular part. A well-known and much-beloved veteran artillery officer conducted light artillery drill every morning, and Savage burlesqued it pretty much every afternoon. Bestriding a broom, girt with a rusty saber and "mess-hall sash," and wearing an old-fashioned "tar-bucket" dress hat, Savage would come capering forth on parade, with his battery after him, a plebe with a musical ear, a paper comb for bugle, in close attendance and similarly mounted. Then "in column of pieces," the six camp wheelbarrows, each drawn by spirited teams of six plebes, others broom-bestriding, per-

sonating chiefs of sections, etc. Then with the whole corps looking on and shouting applause, Dick would put his command through a rattling battery drill, generally at full gallop. It was a screaming farce from beginning to end. Every command was given in a caricature of the officer's high-pitched piercing voice.

"The officer in charge in those days was not required to spend the afternoon in camp, and Dick had it to himself. However, it was too good to last. The officer 'caught on.' Right in the midst of the fun one sunny afternoon some one caught sight of the rapidly approaching form of the officer. Savage loved him, as did everybody else, in spite of his peculiarity. When the news was flashed to Dick he was equal to the occasion. "Percesto hades! Caissons, vanish! M-a-r-c-h!" he shouted, with a frantic wave of his old saber, and away they went, scattering all over the camp. But that was the last of Savage's battery."

It was not all fun and frolic for Dick Savage. He was a brilliant scholar and determined to stand high in his class. In 1866 he seized and held the head in the most difficult study of the course—mechanics—in a class including such brilliant men as Bass, now the famous professor of mathematics at West Point; Hoxie, Knight and Payson, afterwards distinguished officers of engineers. His ambition was greater than his health, and he nearly broke down physically in the attempt. Still, in spite of everything, he held up and graduated sixth in a class of fifty-five, earning the coveted place in the engineer corps.

On graduation he was assigned to duty with Company D of the engineer battalion, and entered upon his duties at Yerba Buena Island, San Francisco harbor. During the succeeding two years he was engaged in engineer work there and in California and Arizona, acting also as aid-de-camp to Major General George H. Thomas and Major General John M. Schofield, commanding the division of the Pacific. In 1870 he tendered his resignation. His work in the Arizona deserts had brought on what was feared was an affection of the lungs, and in 1871 President Grant appointed Savage to a position in the consular service at Marseilles. In the mild climate of southern France he speedily recovered from his trouble, which was found to be desert fatigue only, brought on by hard work and anxiety.

Prior to this time Ismail Pasha had been drawing about him numbers of American officers in an endeavor to increase the efficiency of his army. When Stone became Lieutenant General and Chief of Staff to the Khedive, on the retirement of General Mott, he wanted young blood for assistants, and cabled General Sherman to send him two smart recent graduates of West Point. The bluff old warrior cabled back, briefly, "Take Savage; he is at Marseilles. Best man I know." On

receiving this answer Stone wired Savage to come and see him. Savage resigned his place, went to Egypt, and the result of the meeting with Stone was he was made military secretary, with confidential duty, near General Stone. Then followed some months of very exciting work while the Khedive's army was being licked into shape, a period which gave to Savage's already well-stored mind much new material that was to bear fruit later.

While he was at work with General Stone in the east there was a threatening cloud arising in the west. The Mexican border troubles were becoming a burning question in the United States. There were not a few who were willing to precipitate a war with the younger republic, hoping to reap a harvest therefrom. A commission was to be appointed to investigate the disturbances and see if a peaceful solution could not be found, as President Grant was determined to avert war if possible. An officer who was well acquainted with the border and knew the Spanish tongue was needed. Again General Sherman remembered the brilliant young engineer, and he was advised to return to his own country. This he did with General Stone's consent, and he was appointed a member of the United States commission to Texas to settle frontier outrages, with General T. O. Osborn and T. P. Robb. Incidentally this sudden change of base saved him his head, and thousands of lovers of good stories, much pleasure. Just when the summons to return came Savage was at work organizing the force which Colonel Arendorp afterward led up the Nile. The troops would not fight under a Christian, and the gallant Dane paid the penalty with his head.

After two years' service on the border Savage became chief engineer of the Corpus Christi and Rio Grande Railway for one year, when he returned to San Francisco. A few years later, in company with his charming wife, to whom he had been married in 1873, Colonel Savage began a period of globe trotting, which added to his storehouse a world of material that is now finding vent in the thrilling tales which took the public by storm on their first appearance. Russia, Siberia, China, Japan, Mexico, Spanish Honduras, were in turn visited, the visits being varied by the practice of law in San Francisco, which had become his chosen profession.

During all this time there had been no indication that the gallant soldier and daring traveler was to develop into one of the most brilliant writers of the day. This came about in the most commonplace manner. In the fall of 1890 Colonel Savage returned to New York from a perilous trip to Honduras, where he had been attacked by slow fever and nearly died of exposure. While convalescing a friend suggested to him the idea of occupying his time by writing some of his experiences. The

result was "My Official Wife." This dashing story was first written as a sketch of five chapters. It was received with such favor by friends to whom it was read that Colonel Savage was inspired to rewrite and extend it to a novel. The story is said by the Colonel to be literally true up to the time of entering St. Petersburg. He had left Mrs. Savage at St. Heliers, Isle of Jersey, for a run to the Russian capital, where they had friends. It was in the fall of 1884, just after the killing of the Czar, and the police were in anything but an amiable mood. The heroine of the story was a daring conspirator. She was captured later at Wilna, after one successful trip to St. Petersburg, and Colonel Savage believes she was quietly strangled and buried, as she was never heard of again. Baron Freidrich is also a real character, though somewhat changed. He accompanied Colonel Savage out of Russia. He was chief of police under Ignatief and Loris Melikoff, and represented the Czar at the late manœuvres of the German army.

The story was an instantaneous success and, by the way, has had a steady sale ever since. It has been translated into French, German, Swedish and Italian. Russia would have none of it. It is forbidden fruit there. In consequence there is a regular trade in smuggling it across the border in the French, German and English editions. A dozen women have claimed to be the heroine in the story, but all, Colonel Savage says, are frauds.

This success led the colonel to turn his whole attention to literature, and the series of fascinating stories bearing his name followed. Of these there is nothing needed to be said. Thousands of readers and a steady, continuous sale tell the story of their brilliancy and fascination for lovers of real flesh and blood romance. Nearly all are based on experiences of the author which gives to them a reality as if he were depicting history he witnessed, and of which in part he was. They are full of life and action—quite the antipodes of the modern school of vivisectionists.

On taking up literature as a pursuit Colonel Savage settled in New York. He has a charming home in the Rockingham, on Broadway, where in his library, surrounded by 3,000 works, military, historical, scientific and general belles-lettres, he does his work. In this he is very methodical. When engaged on a story he will work steadily from nine o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the afternoon, with occasional breaks for luncheon and brisk walks when he becomes tired He makes it a rule never to work at night. His life is quiet and regular, broken only by an occasional visit to the theater and a social dinner to a few friends, for the colonel is the soul of hospitality, and nothing delights him more than to get two or three old friends with their feet under his

mahogany and revive the memories of old times. He never talks shop, and it is one of the curiosities of his nature that he has never looked into or read one of the stories which have such a fascinating interest to thousands of readers after he has once gotten it off his hands.

Colonel Savage has the newspaper man's love for soft paper and good lead pencils. His manuscript is written in lead pencil on print paper, running about 300 words to the page. Commencing a new story, he begins by blocking out the plot and general action. Then comes mental digestion and a separation of the story into those periods which are so characteristic of his works. This is followed by what he calls "piling up into squads" and rough notes on character and action. Then the work is laid aside for a month. When it is taken up again three days' time serves to draw together the skeleton. Then comes four or five months of hard, steady writing. Colonel Savage writes easily, seldom changing the original construction, though often words and details. After the first part is passed he says the books write themselves.

When the book is finished comes the tartarean experience with the compositors, as he reads all his proofs four or five times. After the tangles they have made of some of his pet words and phrases have been unraveled and the book goes to press he dismisses it entirely from his mind and never likes even to think of it. As to talking about it, that is altogether out of the question.

After the novel is off the stocks and out of the way, Colonel Savage turns for relaxation to social home amusements, reading and military studies, in which latter he takes a deep interest. Of his reading he said: "I read reviews, history, philosophy, essays and general belles-lettres; very few novels, only the English, French and German classics. The psychological school and the philosophical detail of the change of heart and introspection I cannot understand. I prefer the dramatic, romantic life of men and women alive as they are—not self-painted in their own mental agonies of doubt, but the real, varied life of our times. My favorite books are the Bible, Shakespeare and Goethe. My heroes are Lincoln, Grant and Frederic the Great. I eschew all politics and religious dissension."

This sober and quiet home life Colonel Savage thoroughly enjoys, varying it with occasional trips to Europe, where he and Mrs. Savage have relatives and hosts of friends.

One book, however, is hardly out of the way before another is in mind. The colonel has already in sight work enough to keep him busy for the next five years, which means a great store of pleasure ahead for his many admirers.—*George P. Mathes in The Sunday Herald, Chicago, April 15, 1894.*

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THE PRINCESS OF ALASKA.

A TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES.

BOOK I.

HIDDEN TREASURE.

CHAPTER I.

THE KHAMSCHATKA PACKET. "WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?" BRIGHT EYES AND ROULETTE.

"There goes the signal up on Constantine Island! To-morrow I may know what new surprise my guardian demon has in store! The corvette will be here with the morning tide! And there will be feasting! Revelry, high play and even a Grand Ball of the Emperor's officers! Three years ago, I would have been the official star,—Fedor Orlof, of the Guards,—Chief Aid of the Minister of the Interior! *To-day*" ?——

The speaker turned from the darkening river and gazed at his coarse, gray garb. His voice sank into a sneer, as he dropped on the mossy turf beside a huge bronze gun, ready for mounting.—— "To-day, I am only—No. 24190,—and *I wear the convict patch!* Could Gregory Orlof's grand-nephew sink lower?" The evening breeze swept down the great Amur, on whose gray bosom a wooded island lay in front of the growing fortress town of Nikolaevsk. The Siberian summer was at its height,

and the fragrant incense of the virgin forests on the banks of the mighty stream scented the twilight zephyrs. The lonely dreamer gazed with repulsion at his squalid attire, his coarse mujik boots and browned, ungloved hands. In the East, a thick bank of fog hung over the shallows where the Amur pours out the mingled waters of the Shilka, Arguin, Sungari and Ussuri—a mighty flood—into the shallow Gulf of Saghalien.

"I wonder *where* they will send me now! I have trodden every foot of the twenty-five hundred miles of the Amur banks, and unless I am tied for life to the dim Hades of Saghalien Island, the power of Alexander can send me but in two farther regions. The *one* is Khamschatka, and the *other* dreary Aliaska! If it were not for the cursed port guards on board, I might escape any day on one of these Yankee whalers!" The young man sprang up and paced the interior of the unfinished battery.—Behind him, the lights were already twinkling in the low log houses of the straggling town stretching back into the primeval forest.

"If I had gold, *even here*, I might do something!" the young man mused, "but, alas! I have nothing left! —Not a thing!"—He started as he mechanically lit a cigarette, for on his hand glittered a slender gold band which held together three superb turquoises.

"Ah yes! Olga Darine's ring! I have this fatal reminder of that last wild night on the Island.—My poor Olga!—When the beauty gave it to me, it was before all the gay fellows of our mess! 'It will bring you luck, Fedor,' she laughed! It *has* brought me luck! Some author says: 'In every human nature, there is the highest heaven and the lowest hell!' That witch woman's eyes lured me down into a gulf I never dreamed of! and here, a military convict, I toil—without hope or reward

—my lips silenced,—as a mere instrument of the will of any petty sub-commander! "It is a living Hell!" He stopped his wolf strides!

"Shall I end it all now?" He drew out a keen blade, a peasant's wood knife, and glared around in impotent rage. His eye took a last sweep over the silent river, the scattered red mounds, where grinning tiers of Russian heavy guns waited for the hated English,—the lonely forests, and the fortified settlement wherein *every free man* was his master!—He suddenly sprang up on the low battery parapet and hurled the knife far out into the chill depths of the Amur, for his gloomy glances at the river showed him the American flag, fluttering proudly at the tapering mizzen of a graceful trading clipper. The sight roused him to desperation!

"By Heavens! I *will* escape! Poor, wretched, friendless, yet there is still that one flag! It is the signal of Liberty! I will serve my masters, in silence, yet another year! Some of my old comrades may come over here on duty! They may substitute——" He suddenly ceased as he glanced at the canvass lettered patch on his breast, marking him as the Czar's convict No. 24190. — "If I could change *my* tell-tale garb with that of some dead soldier, should this quest take me to Khamschatka, or Aliaska,—then, *then*, Fedor Orlof may live again! Besides, a sudden foreign war may occur! I may earn my liberty in battle, or hide on one of these whalers, when no watchful police guard has charge! Bakunin baffled the officers thus, and safely reached San Francisco! If I only had *one man* I knew; a confederate—*never so humble!* I swear I will foil them yet! A free man, I have still my youth and courage! To find again the darling woman who gave me that ring! It seems I can hear the wild, joyous shouts of the foyer

again! There is but one Olga Darine! The Queen of Song!"

The young man bowed his head in his hands, but rose, and sullenly plodded out of the battery pit, as a heavy gun boomed its warning signal.—It was the Convict's Recall!——

"I must report off! *The Czar never sleeps!*" The wild, singing notes of a bugle sounded sweetly on the still evening air, as the young man hastened his swinging military stride. Its music wakened memories of reviews on the Champ de Mars, when he had led his grenadier company past the stand, where the eyes of Russia's Empress gazed kindly on her once favorite court page. The clarion now called him back, as a prisoner to be locked within the garrison lines at eight o'clock! After that hour, the criminal, having no passport, would, perhaps, be shot down like a dog by the first heavy jawed sentinel!—And there were double guards posted in these days of eighteen hundred and sixty-five, for the imperious Czar had chosen to take a bold stand in favor of the United States in its terrible civil war! A score of thousands of muscovite soldiery were spread along the Pacific Siberian coast to meet any possible English or French attack. Here, on the banks of the Amur, twenty miles from where the batteries of capes Pronge and Tebakh guarded the river's entrance, an arsenal, dockyard, foundries and military magazines were protected by heavy river fortifications. It was a weird scene! The lonely Amur in its savage, silent grandeur! Asia's great useless artery!

The tall soldier-like convict picked his way through great heaps of scattered military material to the main avenue. As he turned a corner, a hoarse challenge arrested him, with his frame quivering in rage, Orlof brought his hand

to the salute, and in a clear, ringing voice gave his number, adding "From the River Water Battery.—By permission."

"Pass on!" growled the leering peasant, eying maliciously "The Count," as the soldiery nicknamed the aristocratic prisoner.

"This is the bitterness of death! By St. Vladimir, I will kill myself yet!" muttered Orlof, as he saw the lights twinkling in his prison log hut, a hundred yards away. Entering the low door, he threw himself down on a rude bench, and by the flickering fire of birch logs, dreamed of days when in the Winter Palace, the blushing bevy of Maids of Honor had begged him to show them the "White Room," in all its bravery decked for an Imperial Ball.——

His head rested on his arms, as he leaned against a table of rough plank.—There, a bowl of cabbage soup, a simple dish of fish and a flinty loaf of black bread awaited him. The ex-dandy eyed it with disgust! A door creaked, and, from a shed, an old convict hobbled in, with a single tallow candle.—Drawing a glass of tea from a battered samovar, the new comer said, humbly: "You *must* eat, Barin! You are to report at nine o'clock!"

"Who sent for me, Ivan?" the young man queried, lifting his haggard eyes to the old man. It was a dog's abode.——

"General Dachkof's orderly came. There is to be a great council."——"All the officers are assembled!"——

Orlof's eyes lightened.—"I may *learn something*, after all! It is surely an imperial vessel, for the yellow flag and doubled headed eagle was hoisted on the signal tower!"

"The town is full of the up-river officers, and couriers riding everywhere in the garrison. A steamer is lying in the stream, from above!" muttered the old man, as he eagerly attacked the supper.

Fedor Orlof mutely swallowed his tea, and broke a bit of the dark rye bread. Seating himself by the fire, he glazed in its glowing embers. The light falling on his stern face, gleamed on a countenance, in which suffering and despair alone had marred the heritage of the Orlof beauty. Only thirty-four years of age, tall and gracefully knit, his blue eyes, chiselled lips and classic brow, recalled that superb Gregory Orlof whose dare-devil intrigues had made him the *ruler of the great Catherine*, the Semiramis, before whom forty millions of subjects crouched in fear! Fedor Orlof was as handsome as the "giant with the face of an angel, the bold favorite, who nonchalantly opened the Empress' letters, with the remark, '*She* told me to look through this'!"

The air of haughty insolence, the wild, fatalistic courage of the great conspirator, and the clinging elegance of the guardsman, lifted Fedor Orlof above the meaner throng of Siberian prisoners whose misery overwhelmed them! His tawny mustache and yellow crisp curls gave him a singularly youthful appearance.

Leaning his head upon his hand, the brooding ex-officer saw shadow pictures of his brilliant days of the happy past, in the dancing flames. Days of a careless boyhood,—merry glimpses from a youth spent in early luxury,—scenes of wild, romantic raids among the Tcherkess,—and changing memory painted tableaux of that gilded circle of wit and fashion in the strange city of Peter, where a palace and a prison are on either hand of the blue Neva!

In the gloomy silence of the lonely far off Siberian forest,—by the river where great Genghis Khan's triumphal column speaks yet of the bloody Mongol who swept in triumph from the Amur to the Indian sea, Orlof could hear again the golden peals of the happy Easter bells of his innocent days!—And all that love, and friendship, youth, wealth and hope could offer seemed to be his, *once again!* The days of his page-hood, the happy cadet life, the gilded slavery of the "Guards," under the winning glances of tender-eyed fair aristocrats of Petersburg, all came back once more!

And then, a maze of wild days, where song and wassail, the rattle of gold, the shouts of the theatre, the whirl of the race course, the clink of wine glasses, maddened him again! Music stealing back upon his mind, the echoes of an unforgotten voice thrilling his every fibre,—the glances of a loving woman's deep, dark blue eyes, and even the nerve-thrilling rustle of *her* robes!—All this came back, and in the fire, he saw again the beloved face of Olga Darine,—*the face which had lured him on to his ruin!* For, as it vanished, the coals crackled, and the wild whirl of a night of madness, never forgotten, came back and swept over his disordered brain. The rich glow of the firelight fell upon his hand with the three-gemmed turquoises speaking of *her* still!—

He rose, with an oath, and rushed out into the gloom of the night, for the firelight gleams lay like blood upon the hand where the golden ring still glittered! Orlof dared not go further in this vision of these old days, now fled forever—for it was *the blood upon that hand* which sent him here, a nameless prisoner to the far valley of the Amur!—The curse of that *innocent* blood had divided him forever from sapphire-eyed Olga Darine, the darling

of the golden youth of Russia!—And she, tender and helpless, too, had suffered by his mad deed.—

The maddening thought that he knew not even *where* she wandered now,—of her possible fate after a deed he dared not own,—goaded him as he paced the silent streets, like a houseless shadow, waiting till the church bell should clang out the hour for the council. Buoyed up with a new desire to escape, Fedor Orlof mused upon the few advantages of his position.

Besides the arts of the courtier, the gallant, the man of the salon, he had wonderful talents as a draughtsman, military engineer, and was a special élève of the School of Mines. His researches while Chief Aid of the Minister of the Interior had made him invaluable to the Siberian officials in the three years, now expired, of his terrible twenty years' sentence.—But he had been allowed his personal freedom of movement, and, at the factories and mines of the Baikal region,—in river exploration, in military construction and metallurgic research, had rendered valuable forced service. All in vain! For the Czar had torn off the epaulettes of the aristocratic field officer, stricken him from the ranks of the nobility, escheated his estates, and given the ominous designation 24190, to replace the world-famous name of the mighty Orlof he bore.—It was the stern decree of Draconian justice!

As the young prisoner mounted the steps of General Dachkof's headquarters, he murmured: "I may be sent off on some special service, and, by sea or land, the Star of Hope still glitters! Better to stop a rifle ball in a dash for escape, than to die *like a coward* by my own hand! Now, for *my* masters! The sword-bearing slaves of *our common* Master! They need my brains, even here, on the wild, lonely Amur! It is a game for a life!

One against many! I must try and read the dark future! Perhaps this summons may lead on to Liberty, to the Lost Love of the Past,—to my Freedom! Kings enjoy not the unbroken rest of the simple American settler! That star flag in the river is my rainbow of salvation! It is the oriflamme of the aspiring of the world!" The prisoner passed the sentinels with head erect.—

The anteroom was thronged with a crowd of junior officers, who parted, making way, in respect for the misfortunes of the stern-faced convict engineer,—once an Empress' court favorite!—With silent lips,—Fedor Orlof's eyes alone told his gratitude to the young officers whose warm soldierly sympathy touched him, as he passed on to where the adjutant eagerly beckoned him. His hand trembled as he gravely saluted his superiors! His iron heart melted to kindness! The General's adjutant waved him briskly forward

"Come on, Orlof," he said sharply. "The council waits for your description of the coast works!" The council chamber was filled with a throng of officers, smoking, chatting, and renewing old service friendships. At the head of a long table, gray old General Dachkof sat, his breast covered with his stars and orders. The blue uniform of the officers alternated with the long gray overcoats, astrachan trimmed and bullion laced, of the new comers, who were refreshing themselves at the generously spread table. Servants filled out wines, cordials and the white wheat vodki whisky, while the popping of champagne corks indicated the little circle of autocratic generals, for there the fire of Bacchus' battalions was thickest!—

Plans, maps, charts and reports littered the long table, whereon, in front of each man, the huge silver tobacco box, crested with many quaint monograms, contained

each man's cigarette material. A giant bronze samovar in each corner of the hall served for tea, poured hissing hot in thin glass tumblers, metal-framed, the fragrant liquid served without milk, being heavily dashed with rum. Though the Government House was plain, only a great two-storied crib of twelve-inch squared logs, each room being walled up as thickly as the outside,—it was richly furnished. From China and Japan had been brought priceless spoil of the bazaars in bronzes, enamels, porcelain and quaint antique silver. These, with abundant stores of silk, crepes, linens and rich embroideries, were easily bartered for in the superb black sables of Khamschatka, the beautiful dark sea otters of the Kurile group, or the priceless black, blue and silver foxes of the Copper Islands.—While the council assembled, the romantic strains of Verdi floated in the air, blue with the papyros smoke, from an orchestra selected from the five thousand convicts of the Littoral. There was an easy, semi-barbaric opulence in the whole headquarter menage, and a huge gallery shed in rear sheltered a noisy crowd of waiting orderlies, couriers and guards. Behind the official mansion, the quarters of a couple of sotnias of Cossack lancers were reachable by a covered passage and the chain of sentry boxes enabled a message to be rapidly repeated over the three or four square miles of the military settlement of Nikolaevsk.—A luxurious camp headquarters, indeed.

There were lighter elements of romantic variety in the official gathering, for a long line of tarantasses, and khibitkas, was already forming in the great government stables.

The bright-eyed, daring military ladies of the lower Amur had gathered for the extensive festivities awaiting this grand official reunion. On the great stairway were

crowding already merry knots of the younger officers, chatting with these animated beauties in strange attire, while from the reception room above the gay notes of a waltz were echoed in the high refrain of womanly voices to the accompaniment of a really good piano.—Even in Siberia the light-hearted Russian officers lived *en fête.*

Here, at Nikolaevsk, the Commanding General ruled, subject only to the orders of the Governor General, at far Irkutsk, on Lake Baikal, and the advisory counsel of the admiral commanding the growing naval depot at Vladivostock, seven hundred miles down the coast, on the Corean frontier. From Nikolaevsk, by signal, beacon and courier, with dispatch corvettes, the orders of the mighty Alexander I. were spread over Kham-schatka, the northern Amur regions, Saghalien, and even to lonely Aliaska, far over the wild and storm swept Ochotsk Sea. It was true that an annual licensed trader visited the Russian-American posts, from San Francisco,—and that the clouds of predatory American traders and whalers darted in and out of the North Pacific inlets, but as an official Russian appanage, Aliaska was governed from the mouth of the Amur. Swift steamboats already plowed the Amur as far as Nerchinsk, in the Baikal, fifteen hundred miles from the roar of the Pacific breakers.

From thence, the post road, with its stations every twenty miles, stretched to the end of the railway now beginning to crawl out from Moscow and Petersburg.—By cossack pony in summer:—by sleigh in winter:—the Czar's dashing couriers traveled a hundred miles a day on the Emperor's bidding.

It was the arrival of such a secret dispatch from the Emperor's cabinet, hurried down the river on a swift

dispatch boat, aided by the five mile current, which called the notables of the Amur, around the grizzled Chief, who represented here the mighty Czar.

The gathering was timely, for the Imperial ensign flying on the Island had signalled the arrival of a special corvette from San Francisco, via Sitka, and which had touched at Petropaulowski, in Khamschatka, *under sealed secret orders!* The flutter of all this official preparation indicated clearly that there was a personage on board of some marked distinction.

Already the route across the United States was desirable for home communication, and the secret letters of Dachkof's friends, just received overland, indicated that the new comer was charged with a special mission,—that he had plenary power, and was none other than Count Fersen, a talented military favorite of the Emperor. It was, thanks to an intimate friend, in the Privy Council Chamber at the capital that Dachkof was enabled to set his house in order for the unexpected guest.

By a singular coincidence, the wife of this watchful official mentor, the next winter wore a cloak and garniture of black sable, which were the envy of the proud Empress.

As Fedor Orlof entered the room, he turned neither to the right nor the left, but strode up to the Commanding General and stood mute, his hand raised in salute.

"Ah! Vronsky! Clear the room now! Only Commanders are to remain!" said General Dachkof, gravely returning Orlof's salute. The Adjutant courteously led the junior officers to a grand assembly room, where service bonhomie replaced the ceremonies of the council now convening.—With a sign, Dachkof bade Orlof be

seated at a side table. The ex-guardsman mutely obeyed. He had been the target of the eye glances of several men who eyed with upstart insolence the once famous society lion now reduced to only a thing of numerical designation. A mere man machine, whose lips were sealed—*whose future was a zero!*

As the young man seated himself, he saw, with secret pride, arranged before him a series of sketch maps, plans and detailed reports, upon which he had painfully labored for a year.—With the quick eye of a scientist, and the gifts gained in his high functions of the Interior Deparment, he had caught the salient features of the Pacific Siberian problem at a glance. It was the crowning triumph of his own brain!——The Czar would read the convict's words of prophetic wisdom!——

When the council was formally assembled, Fedor Orlof's eye wandered over the brilliance of epaulette and furred cape, star and jewelled gew gaws. With fingers gleaming with Asiatic gems, the commanders lifted the wine glass or twirled the never absent papelito. In his rough garb, silent and abased, Orlof felt his papers tremble in his nerveless fingers. The humiliation galled him keenly!——His heart froze within him!

"My God! *This* punishment is *more than I can bear*," he murmured. Stern old General Dachkof saw the agony on the handsome convict's face. "Poor devil!" he murmured, "he is a *gentleman*, at any rate! "Ah!" he sighed "These mad boys and these worthless women!"—Dachkof's remark finished in a growl, but his attendant, at a sign, placed a bottle of champagne and the General's *own* cigarette case before the declassé noble.——As the servant poured a beaker, Orlof, with a red spot flaming on each cheek, straightened himself and drank with a salute, like a simple soldier.

"*That was well done!* He is a *thoroughbred,* at any rate!" mused Dachkof, as he rapped for order.

"Gentlemen!" said the Commander, "I have called you together to assist me in welcoming Count Fersen, who has arrived on a special Imperial mission. Naturally, the subject of our coast, its defences, the state of the garrisons, the proposed future of the Amur region and Khamschatka, and our relations with China and Corea, will be discussed. Japanese affairs, the Kurile Islands, the state of our convicts and 'assisted settlers,' and all the general interests of our Imperial Master will be reviewed!"——

"While not desiring to influence Count Fersen, who personally represents the Emperor, I have prepared a report on the military situation of the day, which I desire you all to hear.—If any commander can offer aught of value, I request his written report, forthwith, to be handed to my Adjutant who will afford you every facility. Count Fersen will proceed at once up the Amur to Irkutsk, and thence, homeward, overland. I desire the utmost ceremony, courtesy and cordiality observed towards his party. Each of you will be under his extraordinary orders."

At a sign from the General, Fedor Orlof arose and calmly read the report which had been the harvest of his three years of convict life. Besides the military situation, he had added a commercial and sociological summary, with exhaustive remarks upon the gold fields and mines of that great unspoiled treasure region, the upper Amur. Murmurs of admiration attested the approbation of the man of rank, now eager to express their flattery of the Commander's able report! The mute convict held his peace, standing in prison garb, his eyes downcast!——

"*It is not mine!*—Orlof there is the real author!" said the General. Fedor started as he heard *his own*, now unfamiliar, name, and all eyes were turned on him, when the Adjutant hastily entered. A throb of gratitude melted his heart!

General Dachkof rose, after a few whispered words reached his ear, and cried "Order out all the carriages instantly! Gentlemen, let the papers referred to, be handed in early to-morrow. The steam launch of the "Seevoutch" is approaching the landing. I shall ask all Commanders to go to the landing with me!"

Already the bugles were sounding the alert for the troops, and the Adjutant hastily left to spring on his steed and bid the water batteries to thunder out a grim welcome. As Dachkof clasped the sable collar of his sea otter cloak around his neck, he saw the neglected Orlof standing, dejected and alone, by his table.

"Remain here, Orlof," said the General, kindly, for his pity was aroused. The military convict had no legal place, even in the Siberian world. Only the prisoner's log hut and the thankless unpaid daily task. "Here, Ivan!" called the General to his head steward, "make this young man comfortable for the night. Give him a room to himself. I will need you when I talk things over with Count Fersen," said General Dachkof, as he hurried away. The cannon were booming as the four wild Siberian horses sprang away, straining their whipcord-like harness and whirling the light Victoria away like a leaf in the storm. The Emperor's trusted representative *must* be met by the Commander, bare-headed, at the floating landing. The Czar's dignity mantled the Imperial Delegate.

Seated in an anteroom, listening to the ringing laughter of the merry women floating from above, Fedor

Orlof, touched at heart by the old soldier's kindness, burst into tears as he gazed into the dancing flames on the hearth.

"He dared not call me *Fedor Fedorvitch!* He is an *orthodox Russian,* and I—" Orlof started as again he saw the rosy glow upon his luckless right hand. "And I have the blood of a relative staining my brow *with the mark of Cain!*"

In an hour the mansion was alive with a hurrying mass of humanity; without, the regimental bands sounded the Emperor's Hymn and thrilled the guests with old Boyar melodies, alternating with the weird, touching songs of the Muscovite soldiers gathered in mass by the flambeaux lighting up the great portico. Within, in the reception hall, a dozen recently arrived military beaux were the centre of bevies of the laughing, insouciante Russian ladies, and flirting, feasting and drinking advanced in a wild abandon known only to the reckless children of the White Czar.

Gloomily surveying the exciting scene from the open door of his retreat, the ex-noble Fedor Orlof mingled with the throng of common orderlies, sergeants, officers of the guard and imperial couriers. Pushing roughly through the circle a stout sergeant, black Astrachan turban on head, his wooden scabbard slung diagonally, a heavy revolver chained to his belt, escorted a prisoner clad in plain, dark sailor garb. "Peter and Paul! where's the Adjutant?" cried the rude soldier, "I'm to have this man kept to wait Count Fersen's orders. *Go, some of you.*" "Another poor waif of Destiny. Some sad wreck on the shore of error, like myself," thought Orlof, as the stranger turned his face toward the light. He sprang forward a step—

"My God! Pierre Lefranc?" Fedor's eyes were

blazing with eagerness. The unknown made an imperceptible movement of supplication with the eyes. And the once famous Guardsman knew that his fellow-convict wished for *present silence.* He followed the retreating form of Pierre Lefranc, once a marked man in the Russian navy and chief constructor at the Cronstadt dock yards. The Adjutant appearing quickly, had bidden the sergeant advance with his charge.

Fedor Orlof rubbed his eyes as if in a dream. Pierre Lefranc in convict garb—for he, too, wore the fatal canvas badge. "The last time we met was at the grand Easter supper of the Princess Narychkine, when the golden bells of St. Isaac's Church set a million hearts mad with joy. How Vera Milutin clung to his arm in the mad mazurka we danced at three in the morning under the flowers of that fairy ball-room. Another poor wretch under the ban. *The devil rules the world.*" Orlof, with a secret heart-hunger to know the cause of Lafranc's downfall, lingered by his dying fire in a dreary wait, for the hour was already late.

Even now merry revelers were departing for the grand review of the morrow and the later inspection which would busy every man of the settlement, while the tired ladies already planned for boreal decorations to signalize the grand ball to his excellency General Count Fersen. This flashing-eyed Tartar dignitary, with a wolfish mustache, piercing glance and abrupt, accusative manner, had already convulsed the local society to its very foundations. Bluff old General Dachkof, with the frankness of a soldier, saw a sly reserve behind the perfunctory courtesy of the visitor. "I shall push on at once to St. Petersburg as soon as I have finished my work here, General, and I desire to be most fully informed of everything along the Amur. I will meet a courier at

Irkutsk with orders from Petersburg which I shall send back to Khamschatka and Aliaska by the Seevoutch. I wish you to have her *instantly* refitted for a voyage."

General Dachkof bowed in humble compliance. The two officers were now alone in the General's working cabinet with only the Adjutant within call. The richest dainties and wines were spread before them. Selecting a superb Havana, Count Fersen said, "How is your Adjutant? Does he know the Amur? I wish to take an able officer up with me. I am ordered to especially report on the gold interests and the 'Emperor's Purse.' Does he know anything of the new mines above on the river?" Reflecting on the fiscal value of the tenth part of all discovered gold fields reserved as the Emperor's Purse—and desirous of hastening his dangerous visitor's departure—Dachkof touched a bell. "I'll give you the Adjutant, your excellency," he said, respectfully. "On purely military matters, Vronsky is invaluable. I'll also send a man with you whom I have here now. You can see him at once.—Send Orlof up," whispered the General to his Adjutant.

As Fedor Orlof entered the splendid private apartment he met the searching gaze of a man who had sent many a recalcitrant in mad passion before a platoon fire. Count Fersen, a lion in action, was a relentless devil when aroused. Orlof stood the scrutiny of the pitiless soldier without flinching. "*Looks intelligent,*" said Count Fersen, coldly, as if speaking of some handsome animal. General Dachkof silently bowed, and Fedor Orlof's veins knotted on his forehead as Fersen stingingly let fall the words, "*These smart scoundrels* should be made very useful out here. Does he know the gold regions of the Amur?"

"I was a year engaged in special studies and surveys

of the gold mines in the Baikal, your excellency," said Orlof, in an unmoved voice. It was so cold that even Dachkof started. Orlof, in his heart, wished to go up the mystic river with Count Fersen. "*If I could only kill him*—then, welcome the *forest*, the *wolves*," he muttered and ground his teeth.—The visitor grinned. "*He'll do*," laughed Fersen. "By the way, General, there is an idle gold mine now at Sitka. You remember Olga Darine, the matchless prima donna?" Dachkof started, for a sudden convulsion agitated Orlof, making his face a hell of passion. "She is governess now to Princess Maxutoff's little girl, Irma, the Princess of Alaska. What a waste of golden notes. Let *this* fellow attend me. I've got *another* down stairs—a former naval officer named Lefranc. *Put these two rogues together.*" Orlof followed the Adjutant in silence. As he entered his room Pierre Lefranc turned and rushed into his arms when the door closed. "What brought *you* here, Pierre?" cried Orlof, eagerly. "Oh, *bright eyes and roulette*," laughed the Frenchman. "And *you?*"

"*Murder*," gasped Fedor Orlof, as he sank into a seat with a groan.

CHAPTER II.

FEDOR'S SECRET. THE AMERICAN WHALER. THE TREASURE ISLAND. PIERRE'S DISCOVERY.

Pierre Lefranc eyed the suffering man askance! There is a gradation even in crime! "*Did you not know?*" said Orlof, wearily as he gazed into his old friend's eyes. "I have been building ships on the Aliaskan coast for four years, Fedor," replied the delicate-faced Gaul.—"*My trouble,*" he winced, "occurred at Sevastopol, and I was sent out to the Pacific to hide me there as a convict drudge.—I have drawn a blank in the Lottery of Life!"

"Ah! I never heard of your———" Orlof hesitated.—"*Disgrace,* you mean!" hotly said Lefranc. "We are in *the same boat now,* Fedor!" The former naval officer laughed harshly, as a man entered bearing a good supper. Even the vodki bottle and tobacco were not forgotten. "Let's make a night of it!"—"First, tell me of your coming here," said Orlof, eager to hear of the *woman he had once loved!* Perchance, even Lefranc *knew her!*—She *too* was a prisoner!

"Well, I was at Kodiak, ship-building, when the 'Seevoutch' steamed in! This cold machine soldier, Fersen, wanted a *human encyclopedia,* and he took *me*! We rummaged all over the Aliaskan coast. He had outfitted at Sitka! There is some great change impending, and when we ran back to Sitka—where *this beast* did not let me land,—I heard that the Yankees are finishing up their great civil war! There were councils and councils at Sitka!—The corvette is full of documents and reports!—Some say, the Czar and the Americans

will attack England together and capture the British Columbia regions, dividing the spoil! Others, that the Emperor will sell Aliaska to the United States.

"*I can't believe it!* The Romanoffs are not land peddlers!" said Orlof. "True, but there will be a great surprise in Siberia in fifty years! The crown cannot *safely* hold both sides of the ocean.—If we make a lasting friendship with the Americans, we can always supply Siberia and our fleets from the friendly Yankee ports of the Pacific. Why, we have seven war vessels in San Francisco now!" "You may be right, Pierre," slowly answered Fedor. "But what will Count Fersen now do with you?" The Frenchman laughed. "He has no further need of me in languages and naval matters. I am to be sent back to Kodiak or Sitka, on the corvette.

"By Heavens! Orlof, if we could only be *together*, we might escape! *I tried it once!* I'll tell you of my Kayak voyage in search of a whaler, and *how I failed!*"

"We will *escape*, or *die* together!" solemnly said Orlof. "Now," said Lefranc, "I am as hungry as a white bear. After I have eaten, you shall tell me what brought the great Orlof's heir to Nikolaevsk on the savage Amur." He attacked the supper with a wolf's appetite.—

"And *you* shall give me the story of the mischance that led General Lefranc's grandson,—a French emigré noble,—into the ranks of the *condemned*! What a hurly burly this human struggle is!"—

"Ah, Fedor! It is the old story! You know the proverb, '*What Woman?*'" said the mercurial Frenchman, as he drained a glass of vodki, and twisted a cigarette. Orlof had watched him unmoved as he devoured the dainties.—

"What's your *sentence?*" gloomily demanded Orlof. "*Ten years!* I have only *six* left to serve—*if I live!*"

replied Lefranc, whose spirits had visibly mounted. "And *you*, mon ami?" "I have been in hell for *three* years, and I look forward to *seventeen* more, unless the dark genius of evil fortune leaves my side!" said Orlof, with a hopeless groan. "Cheer up, you must not give way! Remember the *blood you have in your veins!*" said the Frenchman, laying his hand kindly on his friend's arm, "You know, we Gauls take our sorrows lightly! Tell me your story! We must hasten! *We may be separated at any moment!* Let us concert some plan of future action! I know the whole Aliaskan coast! We have examined, on this trip, the Aleutian chain and the lonely Khamschatka peninsula! The amount of careful official scrutiny and our long conferences make me believe that there is really something in these rumors of the sale of Alaska! And you may be *pardoned*, some say! Your friends are surely working for you at home! *Your Uncle Stephan—*"

Orlof sprang up and cried: "*Hold! For God's sake!*" His frame was convulsed with shuddering throes of pain and agony!—"Name him not! *He died by my hand!* I have not a friend left in the world!" Lefranc stared at the unhappy young man, who paced the room like a tiger. He stammered: "Your Uncle Stephan—your guardian—the old Nestor of the nobles! *Impossible!* Tell me! Was it an accident? You are surely not a murderer *at heart!*" And yet, Fedor Orlof's jealous ear caught the instant change of tone. "Listen! I must speak now, or I shall go mad! I have suffered so far in silence! I was forty days alone in the dark casemates on the Neva, until dragged before a summary court!

Lefranc forced the sufferer into a seat by the fire, saying: "Hasten, there is the midnight guard changing! We may soon be interrupted! Tell me all quickly!"—

Orlof raised his eyes, wild with all the sorrow of a lost manhood! They were as fierce as the hunted wolf's when he turns at bay. The ruined noble told the story of his shame.—

"Pierre," he slowly said, "Do you know what it is to *love* a woman?" The Frenchman mused, "I cannot answer you! The lower forms of womanhood never tempted me! I know, to my cost, the bright, hard-hearted, reckless women of our Russian society.—Gay, impassioned, as changeful as the sea, insincere, luxurious, and worn at heart! Demanding pleasures, change, a horde of lovers, and every social plaything of the hour! They carry on a ceaseless duel, in which the *defence* yields freely, even if the *attack* falters! The tiger heart under a bosom of snow! *Ah! Yes!* I know the court circle! The smiling devils with low cooing voices and daring eyes of mad witchery! They have ruined me! Fedor! —*But I never loved!* I never met the woman worthy of the sacrifice of a man's life, of his honor, of his freedom! I never met one whom I would serve forever! Remember! We French emigrés, driven into Russia by the mad days of ninety-three, are only national sojourners! What would you have? When my father died, sword in hand for the Czar, in the Polish campaign, I was sent by the Emperor to the Naval Academy, I have lived alone! *I only know the husks of womanhood!* No! I never loved! *And you?*"

"From the moment when I met her,—*she was all the world to me!* And now, even here," said Orlof, sadly,— "I can hear the rustle of her gown! It thrills my heart! I wake at night! For I feel in the land of dreams, the poor prisoner's heaven,—her hand upon my brow! I can even hear, at times, her voice! The whispered word 'Fedor' sounds yet on my ear! I wake only to

misery and the agony of shame! Young, lovely and loving—a very dream of beauty,—with every maddening charm that Venus gave her mystic daughters!—She possessed a soul of passionate fire! My life took on a mad wildness from the very moment I clasped her to my breast—the fatal hour!—when in those wonderful eyes, I saw the truth, hidden till then, *that she loved me in return!*"

"You never met her, Pierre.—When you and I parted, I was sent as special aid to the Czarevitch, for he went to the Kherson to be made Ataman of the Don Cossacks. I was the rising man of the Regiment!" The prisoner sighed heavily.

"Yes!" said Lefranc, "Fedor Orlof's name was then on every tongue! The great world envied your station, your blood, your gallant bearing and your golden future, for did not the Empress destine you to marry the Princess——!"

"*Name her not!*" sternly interrupted Olof! "Let her forget that such a wretch as Fedor Orlof ever kissed her blue-veined hand!" He continued calmly "In the suite of the Czarevitch I went to the Caucasus! I was his chosen companion in the hunt—his attendant at his secret trips into those wild vales where Love and Romance cling still to the coy beauties of the wild mountaineers! I even saved the life of the Imperial heir in a mad adventure!—On my return to the capital, the gilded court envied me as I dashed down the river drive, the sole companion of the Grand Duke's troika rides. *You* were given your splendid place at Sevastopol and, I think, we met no more after that Easter Ball, when the Narychkine brought all the wonders of Fairyland to our icy capital to please the delicate darlings of the young patrician circle!"——

Lefranc gloomily nodded. After a moment's silence, Orlof continued, "Then I met *her!* My life changed as if by magic! From a gay gallant,—the chosen heir of my millionaire Uncle Stephan Orlof,—the leader of the exclusive yacht club set,—a bold duellist and desperate rider, I became at once an impassioned and moody lover! It seemed as if my whole soul had been merged in her own! My heart beat no longer in my own breast,—it was buried in her silver bosom, her blood thrilling the inmost fibre of my being! *That is a true Russian's love!*"——

"This love soon became *a mad fever!* I can not bear *even now* to speak her name! But it was the Czarevitch who led me into her circle! It was only as his satellite, that I first knew her.—My lips were, perforce, *sealed!* I dared not oppose the ardent imperial lover! My future career,—the very safety of my family depended on my prudent silence!—Uncle Stephan, the head of a proud clan, opened his great palace to society, for *me alone,* as my cousin Vera,—his only child,—was still in the superb Catherine Institute, sealed from the eyes of the world. I had no counsellors!—None to advise! I fed upon my secret, for I dared not openly scheme to supplant my imperial master!—But we loved!—*Our eyes soon told the story!*—It was a dangerous and unspoken secret! Before *her,* the dark gulf of ruin yawned, if she aroused the prince's resentment!—But the delicious hour of mutual avowal came!—I was transplanted into an earthly Paradise! *I, Fedor Orlof,* was beloved by one who spurned the passion of the great Czarevitch!—Besides ourselves, only her faithful maid knew of our stolen interviews in the hushed hours of the night, when the great white stars hung over the Neva! Even in this savage wilderness, I have lived over every hour of that

elysium! I was forced to dissemble! My personal duties chained me in the day to the Grand Duke's side. His imperious love swelled to a madness! One careless whisper, and I would have been sent to the underground lead mines of the Baikal, to rot in a chain, torn from some other luckless fellow's carcass! 'Grattez le Russe!' You know the rest! I could not appear with her in public, for my beloved would then have been the victim of '*some mysterious happening!*'

Orlof's lip curled in a sneer.

"And worst of all, my darling's shining eyes and glowing beauty (heightened daily by our restrained passion) excited at last the fiend-like jealousy of the imperial suitor! I was not forced to play a double part as a man of honor, for I invited none of his confidences! I took my risks honestly!—But I shuddered at the dangers hanging over the golden-haired goddess who was all the world to me!"—

"She was totally ignorant of the dark secrets of Russian higher life! She knew not of the hideous history of the lower tier cells on the Island, where the drowning victim, chained to the stone wall, has often yelled for mercy—in vain—as the icy tide of the Neva rose inch by inch! The very breezes whistling past the lonely fortress strand are laden with the last sighs of slaughtered innocence! I have seen a woman's kerchief fluttering in last farewell from the dark dungeon window slit, while I have formed my grenadiers around her lover's scaffold there!"

Orlof's brow knotted in the congestion of the blood rushing through his veins.

"I have seen, Lefranc," he whispered, "the body of the patrician victim drawn forth on a hurdle, when

around the fair neck, *the strangler's finger marks belied the tale of suicide!*"

He spoke in a hoarse whisper now:——

"It was to save *my Olga*——" Lefranc started as he heard the name,—"that I plotted day and night! I *could* not, I *dared* not confide in the head of my house! To loyal old Stephan Orlof, the will of the Emperor was law! I had no brother, no trusty friend,—you were gone! To veil my overmastering passion, I plunged into apparent excesses! It was then I earned the name of '*the mad Orlof!*' But I lived only in Olga's love! The winter *nights* were my *real days!* I moved as if in a trance! Day by day, I saw our coming doom swinging nearer! Detection, separation, sorrow, prison, even death by suicide,—for in my heart of hearts, I feared the Grand Duke's spies! I trembled, too, *for Olga*, whose steady repulsion only inflamed the baffled Prince!"—

"I was a blind fool," cried Orlof, "not to have known that his minions would watch the *one* woman whom the future ruler of ninety millions could not bend to his royal will! I had lavished my fortune, always controlled by haphazard, in secret princely gifts smuggled to my hidden mate! I had a mad joy in seeing her brow and fair neck decked with *my own* jewels; while the *Grand Duke's* costly offerings lay idle in their unopened cases! It was impossible for me to leave Russia! In declining the personal service of the heir-apparent, I would ruin my whole line! The future would be a blank and full of unknown horrors! I dared not leave Olga! She was tied to the great city's pleasures! A thousand eyes were centered on us! The growing fever convulsed my brain! I could get no passport to leave Russia, and, alas, my Orlof face was too well known to fly! Every frontier offi-

cial knew of the Czarevitch's jovial shadow—*Fedor Orlof!*"——

The young convict drained a glass of vodki, as he hoarsely murmured, "*The end came suddenly!* We had studied every avenue of escape. A secret refuge in the house of an old steward of my dead father's was prepared for Olga! He swore on the fealty of fifty years that he would hide my darling and smuggle her away with Archangel merchants who need no passports, for the White Sea,—from there, *Olga* could easily reach Sweden and be, at last, safe! But, *I* was caught in the toils! It was natural that Stephan Orlof should be enraged at my balking the plans of the Empress for my splendid marriage! I could not, as a man of honor, sacrifice the beautiful girl whom she destined to be my bride! *I dared not speak!* The friendship of princes of the blood royal is fatal to their intimates! My uncle vainly tried to hold me back from the social excesses which veiled my real life! He, the most generous of men, finally refused money supplies for my wild career. I had lands, forests, mines, serfs, I was my uncle's joint heir, but the Jews *alone* would furnish me funds!—My heart queen's brow wore the shadow of impending disaster!—The baffled Prince of the blood at last *openly* taxed her with favoring a rival! Each happy stolen interview terminated, as our heart embrace was broken, —in the mutual oath—*she* to fly to old Podolski and *I* to meet her (at any risk) at the castle of Count Oxenstiern, at Torefors, on the Gulf of Bothnia! Podolski—an old Finn,—was to guard the treasure of my loyal heart till we met!

One fatal evening, accompanied by Ivan my serf, a foster brother, I left the Orlof Palace, after a stormy scene, to go to the Yacht Club to await the midnight

hour when I could safely baffle the Grand Duke's spies! Olga's maid was on watch for my private signal.—A late visit was nothing unusual in a semi-arctic city, where the long nights are turned into day.

"Go," cried Stephan, as I vainly appealed for money, "I will not feed your mad follies longer! See," (he cried in his rage) "I have *a hundred thousand roubles* in that cabinet! Marry! I pay your debts! This money is yours! But not a kopek shall you have for your gambling friends—your insane freaks!"

I left the old Boyar noble, his white head shaking in rage.——I was carried away with a choking desire to leave Russia *forever!* I burned to breathe the air of freedom, to bear my darling Olga away to some calm retreat by the sculptured shores of Sicily or the dreaming islands of the Greek Sea, where we could give our hidden love its countenance openly by day,—where she could be mine,—*my wife, forever!*"

Orlof passed his hands over his aching eyes as if to shut out a haunting vision. "I reached the Yacht Club after waiting to see my uncle drive off to a ball of the noblesse. I dared not own the hideous suggestion which was lingering unframed in my mind. I knew every nook of the home of my fatherless boyhood! I would return when the lazy servants gave themselves up to their junketing, and the cabinet would easily yield to the blow of a hunting knife. Why not, aided by Ivan, be leagues away before dawn? *Olga could follow!* Podolski was true as death! I would send a ring she had given me, the token of supreme danger, to her by Ivan! A common sleigh could bear me over the frozen Neva to the suburb, where Podolski kept relays ready for Olga's hour of need! Alas! as I entered the Yacht Club Ivan whispered, '*We are followed!*' It was indeed true!

Dark forms crouched in a swift sleigh close to us! Bidding Ivan wait, I approached the club door, determined to return to my home after a social appearance and a glass of Burgundy, drop Ivan with my message for Olga and sleep at the Orlof Palace! There I would be safe. As I neared the door two muffled men approached me; one whispered, '*Count, all is known!* The Czarevitch recognized the pearl necklace I would not sell him! *I have told him all.*' The other man was a brother Israelite of the dog of a jeweler, a man to whom I owed large borrowed sums! He insolently demanded his money! *Pierre!* then, the devil entered my tortured heart! I strode in without a word, drank a glass of fiery brandy, filled my case with cigars and slowly drove homewards. At the Italiansky Bazaar I dropped Ivan, who clutched the fateful token.—Then, with the swiftness of the wind, I drove back to the Orlof Palace.

"All was dark! I dismissed the driver and entered the fateful gateway, for the last time *an innocent man.* I could feel my blood bounding like boiling quicksilver! Stealing to my room, I seized my revolver and a heavy knife! Ivan was to wait on the Admiralty Quai with a sleigh and a trusty driver!

"I knew that in an hour Olga would be safe in Podolski's humble home! Before daylight she would be on her way to the gloomy northern forest roads, whose obscurity meant safety! I laughed softly as I stole into the dark library where old Stephan spent his days! He had sold an estate, a wood domain, and I well knew the bundle of thousand rouble notes he taunted me with. *I was possessed with a devil!* With a vigorous effort I pried open the rotten old mahogany cabinet, and, in a moment, the heir of the Orlofs was a *thief of the night!* Would to God that I had died as I stood there, the

bundle of crisp notes in my hand!—Hastily secreting them, I strode to the door, meaning to leave the palace by a little postern used by the dvornik alone! I had kept its key for years! *Horror!* As I entered the hall a man grasped me roughly. I struck home blindly! I heard a heavy fall on the floor, deadened by the tufted Persian rugs!

"One hollow groan alone told me the awful truth! *I knew that voice!* It had been raised in blessing over my cradle! I rushed like a madman to the postern! I gained the street, and, like a shadow, fled along, my heart scarce beating, to the Quai! In five minutes we were on the river's frozen bed. The frightened Ivan only answered in monosylables. But my senses returned with the cold air of the Neva! I found Olga's maid had led him to the woman for whose dear sake I had stained my hand with blood. '*I will be there*,' she said. I could extract no more from the affrightened serf, who lashed the horses on! As I raised my hand, in the pale moonlight, I felt a warm stain upon it! *It was blood!* '*Faster! Faster!*' I yelled, and away we sped into the dark forest! I drank the fiery fluid from Ivan's flask, which he forced on me! My head fell back helplessly in the furs!—When I awoke I was roughly shaken! A Cossack-mounted police guard of a dozen were grouped around! My exhausted horses lay *dead* in the snow, and *Ivan, tightly bound*, was guarded by a soldier, naked sabre in hand!

"As I struggled to my feet a rude sleigh approached from a near farm écurie, an officer urging it on!

"The awful truth flashed over my mind! *I was a prisoner!*—Was I—*was I a murderer?* A stern police agent roughly ordered me to enter the sleigh; as I did my eyes met the gleam of faithful Ivan! He yelled

quickly, '*You are betrayed! Master! The maid warned them! The lady is a prisoner, too!*' I heard a scuffle, and as I twisted my head around my devoted follower lay there prone on the blood-stained snow, his head split open by a sabre stroke!—

"I knew nothing more till I was dragged from a cell before a summary court in the fortress. On the table lay a package of bank notes! The accursed treasure which was to be the means of bearing Olga to the paradise we dreamed of in the Greek Sea! I stood mute—for I knew nothing! I heard myself condemned to the loss of all rights and twenty years penal servitude in Siberia! The *murder of my uncle* was the crime! I learned from the evidence that my uncle had returned suddenly from the ball, and, hearing the noise, the brave old man had sallied forth from his sleeping rooms to meet his death at my hands unwittingly. The evident fact of my belief that it was *only a servant*, saved me from the doom of the legal death for *slaying a kinsman!* When asked if I had anything to say, I caught the eye of the Grand Duke's pet aide-de-camp—my fellow in the Czarevitch's favors! Across my disordered brain flashed the thought of Olga,—my helpless love,—the idol of my manly passion,—the goddess of my existence! She was now a prisoner,—*in the power of the haughty Prince!* With her name trembling on my lips I bowed my head and murmured '*Nothing!*' My judges exchanged significant glances! I caught a pale, wintry smile of approval from the lips of the Czarevitch's boon companion! I had been true to my order!—He turned upon his heel and left the room! At least one ignominy was spared me in my downfall,—the shame of betraying the *private life* of the imperial master I served!" Orlof's eyes were streaming with bitter tears!

"Now! Pierre,—you know my secret! *You alone know my rival's name!* You alone can see how an overmastering passion bore me along in devious ways to my ruin! That I struck is true! But God knows my prayers have daily assailed the gate of Heaven for the forgiveness of my blind crime! *I worshipped grand old Stephan!* Would that I had told him of my unhappy love! Better had I gone forth alone, an honest man, to alien lands! But I was demented! The philtre of a love beyond all bounds had crazed my brain! Followed by the wail of my orphaned cousin I was haled forth to this barbaric land! I have never taken the Czarevitch's name upon my lips! *I am civilly dead!* I shall never mock the justice of God by daring to ask pardon of the sweet girl whose life I have clouded with a helpless sorrow! I have lived as an automaton! I only know that the little Countess Orlof is alive, the greatest heiress in Russia, and now a world-famous beauty! But, Pierre, my friend of older days, the future is a blank for me! *I dream of her whom I have lost!* Of the darling woman I crushed to my heart in a last embrace, and whose name I have never heard spoken since until to-night!"

"You have not told me yet who she was, my poor Fedor," said Lefranc, his eyes kindling with excitement!

"She was the loveliest woman in the White Czar's broad realm, and the Queen of Song!" slowly replied Orlof, who dropped his tired head upon his hands. "And a wild, wintry ocean divides us to-night on this theatre of human misery,—for she *too* is a prisoner in a far-off land!"

"*The reigning Prima Donna!*" echoed Lefranc. "I had heard of such a disappearance, but I fancied that she had only hidden her nightingale voice in some

favored lover's bower!" Standing up to Orlof, Lefranc energetically exclaimed: "We *must* escape! If we can only remain near each other! For Fedor," he gravely said, "The Grand Duke will never *forget* and never *forgive!*"

"You are right! There is no hope," replied Orlof. "And the outraged orthodox nobles will hound down forever the Russian who killed a member of his own family. I swear to you, Pierre," cried Orlof, his eyes flashing, "I never dreamed of seizing the money till poor Stephan taunted me! I only coveted it to send my Olga, my defenceless darling, out of the jaws of a double tyranny! See what a slender reed we leaned on! The maid enriched herself from my bounty,—spoiled my defenceless darling, and then coldly *sold us both to ruin and shame!*"

"It is idle to think of redressing my wrong! The car of Juggernaut will roll over me! I have neither money, power or a single friend!—I have sealed the tomb of my past life. One thought alone has sustained me! One Star of Hope has twinkled in the darkness of the years in the convict barrack! To see *her* again, to hear her say: *Fedor! I love you! I forgive you!*"

"Ah, God! Pierre! Think of these four years! Her wasted life, her ruined career! Her sufferings! A queen of beauty! The child of song, to be the sport of Destiny, the plaything of an hour!"

"Was she a Russian?" said Lefranc, anxious to relieve Orlof's distress.

"Her mother was a wonderful Hungarian child of beauty and genius, and when she died in Italy, her husband, a rich South Russian, left the girl abroad! His death in a riot of his serfs caused her to be left penniless, for the mother was not orthodox! It was a fatal

day when my love was lured to Petersburg by the wild enthusiasm of the dwellers under the northern lights! There is nothing *sweeter* than love! Nothing *stranger* than the turns of Fortune's wheel! Nothing *sadder* than the iron grip of Destiny!"—

"Did *you* not hear her story at Sitka, Pierre?" eagerly asked Fedor.

"Alas! No, my poor friend!" answered the Frenchman. "This pitiless cur, Fersen, used me, in secret, to confound the officials whom he sharply catechised. I was jealously guarded—At Kodiak, we only knew of the outer world by the annual visit of the one San Francisco trading brig! I was not allowed to communicate even with the occasional whalers there! I tried to *drink myself to death!* Strange to say, the black rum nourished me! The continued rain made outdoor holiday trips impossible, and the fierce brown bears, ravenous for the fish of the shores, were an effective guard in the long lonely days of my Kodiak captivity! I sought surcease of sorrow in my work! I was allowed sufficient rough creature comforts. My only pleasure was to learn the Aleut language and the dialect of the Aliaskans. I have kept myself from going mad, by work, stern and unremitting, the only panacea for a broken heart!"

"Were you well treated?" asked Orlof.

"My jailers, as a rule, were coarsely good-humored. —There was nothing to gain by torturing me!—I had sunk beneath human notice. Besides, if they killed me, they lost their only naval constructor! If I died worn out, or was thrown in a dungeon, the necessary work would be paralyzed! The officials spent their time making secret hoards of rich furs, debauching the half-breed women, or drinking and gambling,—When a Russian war vessel touched at Kodiak, a hell brew of

flaming rum punch kept all hands mad while the orgies could be kept up!"

"And you tell me you tried once to escape! If you failed *alone*, how can we succeed *together?* I do not know if I wish now to escape! If Olga is at Sitka she will be all the world to me!"

"There will be many chances open to us in the changes to come!" said Lefranc. "If the Americans buy Alaska, the clearing out and general removal will relax the vigilance of all our guards."—How to get you *over* there is the one present trouble! You are to go up the Amur with this brute Fersen. He needs watching! *He is a cruel tyrant!* Beware of rousing him! It means Death!"

"So it seems," doggedly answered Orlof. "But he hates me already! He would try and thwart any wish I might dare to prefer! He may know the old story! I may not hope to win *his* favor!"

"Then watch your own behavior every moment. Let your attitude be only one of callous indifference.—I am to have necessary dealings with the Commanding-General here to fill all the requisitions of the Aliaskan repair yards needed to put all Government property and craft in working order. If General Dachkof favors me at all, I can demand *your* help! I am the only capable man they have! Now, you are professionally fitted to help me! Let us conceal our friendship, and, on your return, I will boldly ask for your aid!—I can feign illness and overwork.—I know the 'Seevoutch' is sorely needed on the other coast! Dachkof, naturally zealous, will hurry her departure! But *beware* of this Fersen, he is an icy-hearted brute! His eyes can read a prisoner's inmost soul!"

"Now, Fedor, as to our secret plan!"—Two years

ago, an American whaler put in at Kodiak, to land the third mate, a young fellow who was invaluable to them, for he knew every inlet of the Arctic. I was in the hospital with him and, thanks to my English, (acquired in handling our hired British shipwrights). we could confer safely. Raised from boy, drudge and cook, by his thirst for gold, and marvellous wit, this Aleck McMann is a singular character!—He drinks not; he stores up the secrets of his trade for his future promotion, and he speaks every dialect of the Ochotsk, the Arctic and the Behring Seas. He was cast away two years among the Tchuktches on the Kamschatkan peninsula. He also knows the fur and ivory trade—its every secret—and he can handle the friendly, but wily Siberian coast tribes, who wait for his annual visit. We became very intimate, as I aided him greatly!"

"I burned for my freedom! I could see McMann's slyness, and bargain for bargain, *I* agreed to be of use to *him!* After a duel of wits, he finally promised to aid me in my escape! Every year, his ship leaves San Francisco in March, returning in October. He had promised to aid me to reach California, and to further my fortunes. In return, I am to watch all the Aleut and Eskimo tribes. the seal and otter hunters and the interior natives of the Yukon, for the secret source of their gold supplies! McMann has found the Aliaskan natives above Sitka, around Chicagoff Island and the Takou River, to have great quantities of grain gold, *of which they do not know the value!*—By secret visits to Cross Sound, McMann has bartered cargoes of rum with these natives for this gold dust at an enormous profit! —In order to avoid the war vessels at Sitka, and the leading Russian authorities, McMann, (who is the guiding spirit) induces his owners to make Kodiak

Island their refitting port. He gets the *rum* from the corrupt Russian officials there, paying in *American coined gold*, and also taking their stolen furs, secretly robbed from the Russian Government tribute, at enormous prices. He has promised to rescue me next year, if I can find for him the source of the gold dust which the natives of Cross Sound obtain in such plenty. I see these natives for months yearly, and I have gained their confidence though they are sly and artful! He keeps all the gold dust transactions a close secret."

Lefranc filled his glass.

"I will be brief!—McMann is a compound of sailor, miser, trader and pirate!—I know that he left the trusting natives of a Plover Bay village dead after a debauch in which he cruelly gave them barrels of poisoned rum as a present, and then, removed an enormously valuable cargo of whalebone,—*their only wealth!* I fear this brute McMann, so I have *lied to him!* He knows my influence over the Aliaskan natives, and *I have magnified it!*——For he is my only hope! He may save both of us later!"—

"Now, if I can effect your removal to Kodiak, we could easily *pretend* to have discovered the location of the treasure region,—and it is probably some *coast volcanic island*, and next year, we must flatter him and escape with him. He will naturally return to California to confer with his owners! Then, once at San Francisco, *we are free!* We can bid, *even him*, defiance! On American soil, the Czar's spies can rage in vain!"

"I will think it over! I might perhaps escape from *here*, now, into Mantchuria and Corea and finally gain China or Japan," thoughtfully said Orlof.

"True! But the woods here are full of the gigantic tigers of the Amur forest! You have no help! no sup-

plies! no money! no arms! You would surely perish like the thousands whose bones have been gnawed by the wolf packs of these pathless woods! It is an almost impossible task! Again, if your Olga is at Sitka, Fedor, you might be able to *aid her!* The little Princess of Aliaska may be able to help you *both!*" Lefranc smoothly said.

Orlof sprang to his feet.——"I am *yours to the death!* We *must* cast our lots together!"——

"For Olga's sake!"——

"I will stay with you to the very last!" pledged Lefranc, as their hands met. The two companions in misery threw themselves down at last on the fur couches, for the dying fire now told of the early morning hours. In low tones, the excited comrades, wooing sleep in vain, spoke of *the prisoner's one hope*—a plot for liberty!—

"Did *you* not try to escape?" said Orlof.

"Last year, McMann prepared a hiding place for me on the 'Reindeer,' his trading vessel, and flew a signal which we had agreed on to warn me for two days before they left Kodiak. Stern and silent, he is the autocrat of his vessel.—He only needs a little more practice in scientific navigation to have a *separate* command. He promised me to stand up and down, off St. Paul Bay, for a night, as I had concealed months before, a good Kayak or skin boat among some refuse harbor material. In furtive visits, I had stored this light thirty foot canoe with some provisions, bottles of water, hard rye bread, and dried meat and fish. A native jacket and hooded cap, a few cords and a spare double handed paddle were my list of treasures!"

"*Oh, God! Orlof!* How I counted the crawling moments till the dark eventful day when the 'Reindeer' stood out of the harbor!—It was easy for me to leave

my own hut at sundown, as there is no fear there of any convict quitting the mountainous island!—I had only to report daily at my work. It was one of the few fair days of the year, when I marked at sundown the American bark with its tell-tale streamer flying at the mizzen, standing off and on! The lazy Russian officials deemed her only watching for bowhead whales.—In the silence of a chill starlit night, I dragged the light boat to the water's edge, and I had marked out the course by the tall peaks around the bay of Chiniatskoy!—I had stolen two bottles of rum, some tobacco and a flint and steel.—With the vigor of despair, I put boldly to sea in the frail canoe!—I had marked the movements of the stars, and well I knew the local currents!—I paddled out of the harbor undetected!"——

"I prayed to God—the God so heedless of the down-trodden prison wretches of Siberia,—to hold back the daylight fog! For, if at dawn the whaler was *in sight*, with my spare paddle and some old red cloth, I could rig up a signal! Out alone in the darkness, my Kayak tossed hither and thither by the shore surf; I voyaged boldly on a lonely sea, in the single hope of the long delayed rescue!——The natives even sleep lashed in these Kayaks, balancing with the instinct of generations of canoe men! I drifted when I could paddle no more!" —I woke to renewed exertions!——

"I toiled manfully! In the dark silence of the night, I implored the mercy of God for one of His meanest creatures! My arms soon became stiff,—I became chilled, and even the fiery rum failed to keep me awake! —The gray, wet, icy fog closed in like a pall of death around me!—My mind ran in dreams over my wasted life! I lived again the Petersburg student days! The scenes of riot and wassail came back! The sinful hours!

My wanton deeds! The shameless errors of caste and vicious impulse! The cruel whistling winds menaced me! Dark avenging shapes seemed to pursue! My shaken nerves lost their control of my wearied brain! On I drove through the anxious night!"——

—"Dashed madly on in the gloom, I was in an exalted state of mental tension, born of fatigue, exertion and mental excitement! I was again at Sevastopol! My foolish mad career among the patrician nobles of the south returned! I heard again the exciting rattle of the gold at the roulette table!—I thrilled once more with the shrill laughter of those smiling vampire women who helped me to throw away the Czar's gold, after Pierre Lefranc became an embezzler and a cheat! Luxury, pampered social vice, emulation of the reckless Russian gentry, swamping me in an insensate whirl of recklessness,—*all this came back to me!* I woke with an icy wave drenching me!"—

"Alas! The airs of morning blew the fog away from my drifting Kayak, only to show me no sail in sight and, as I lifted my wretched head, the salt spray half drowned me, a miserable, drifting, helpless creature! Great clinging shapes of leaden fog wheeled and veered around.—I knew then that *all was lost* and,—in despair, —I slept in utter insensibility!—When I recovered my senses, I was in a shore camp of the Kodiak natives! An otter spearing party had found my stranded canoe entangled in some rocks of the headland, whither the shore current of the morning tide had swept me! Knowing my awful punishment, if detected, I glibly told them I had essayed a fishing trip in a stray kayak, and was carried out to sea! I was taken back to the settlement and kindly received. The 'Reindeer' was hull

down on the open sea! I had failed! And hope fled my breast!"—

My brutal superiors easily believed the tale. But the star of hope had set for another long winter in the misery of an Arctic prison! *You know what that means!* Tempting insanity!—

Now, on this year's visit, McMann, who was forced to put to sea to avoid the dangerous fog, has promised to have a boat's crew wait in a hidden inlet, and surely bear me off to the ship! He can transfer me at sea to *another* Yankee ship!—But I must discover *the secret of the Gold Island!* On this hangs my salvation, unless by a prisoner's cunning I can *deceive* him till I am safe! *All convicts are liars!*—and *I am one of them!* I owe the world—my fellow man—*nothing now! I am a human zero!*"—

Pierre Lefranc ceased with a start, for the heart-broken Orlof slept, and the worn and haggard Frenchman then drifted away into the land of unhappy dreams, to wake with his strangely met companion at the sound of the bugles calling the whole garrison up to meet that most captious dignitary, Count Fersen in a grand review!

Two days later, the swiftest stern wheeled steamboat on the Amur, bore Count Fersen and his suite away from the Nikolaevsk landing.

Thunderous cannon, the wild martial music, the houras of the soldiers, gave a manufactured enthusiasm to the flitting of the official stormy petrel who had stirred up the headquarters community.

Fete and ball, feast and parade, marked the parting hours! Apparently careless, Count Fersen still saw Pierre Lefranc busied at his duties, as he gave his sealed orders to the corvette captain with *his own hand.*

"Let this naval constructor have *any help* he needs, General! Treat the fellow well! *He is only repaying the Emperor for a few score of stolen thousands of roubles!* His peculiar vices are quite gentlemanly—*pretty women and roulette!*

"I shall have that aristocratic murderer of yours keep my official journal as far as Nerchinsk! If he makes *me* as *good a report* as he did *you,* I won't grudge him a few hundred roubles to drink away the bloody visions of his crime! Why the devil did he not *kill himself!* He *was* once a noble gentleman and has really good blood in his veins!

"From Nerchinsk, I shall go on day and night, by relay imperial post sleigh, and there will then be *no journal* to keep! I know that sixty days of devilish monotony! The wailing forest! The sparkling snow drifts! The dirty log post stations! A dash from a mad wolf pack, and a four thousand miles view of a drunken peasant driver's back! *Ah, the service!*"

"But, Dachkof, you lucky dog, *you will retire* in three years on a double pension, with a dozen new orders and medals, and you will drop into a place in the brilliant circle of the Winter palace! You can forget in sunning yourself in the smiles of that daring, dainty bevy of the tempting women of the Court, these lonely frontier days!"—

Fersen sighed! He was a *scientific voluptuary,*—and his keen, glittering Tartar eye was as unmoved by woman's helpless tears, as by the blood of the defenceless men who fell victims of his relentless rage!—

"*I,* my dear Dachkof," he said, as he drew his superb fur gloves over hands sparkling with exquisitely rich rings, "I am *doomed* to be *an official favorite* of the *Czar!*"

The Count noted Orlof, note-book and sketch book in hand, ready at his post.

"*Do your best, fellow!*—or you may find *a hundred lashes* waiting you at *Nerchinsk!*"

This was the noble Count Fersen's encouragement!—

As the boat sped up the broad, rushing stream, Fedor Orlof gazed at the shores of the mighty river, and was tormented with a wild desire to snatch the gun of a guard, blow Fersen's head to pieces, and then throw himself into the crystal flood, which seemed, gliding darkly below to tempt him to the unknown depths of the sea of Death!—

But he held his peace—for three long weeks of unceasing brutality, the face of a guardian angel—Olga Darine, haunted his slumbers!—The man who *now* lived but to see that dear memory-painted face once again, treasured but her dream-face, and her troth ring—two reminders of his hopes of the future, the safeguards of his yet human identity!—The dream-face smiled on the poor prisoner of the Amur—a tyrant's victim day by day!—

For cheery, bustling Pierre Lefranc was already gaining an influence over General Dachkof, who was struck with the Gallic adroitness of the talented man!

Lefranc had whispered to Orlof in adieu: "I *will* manage to win over old Dachkof! *Remember! The American whaler and freedom!*"

And the silent kindness of the old General touched Orlof and melted his heart when he found himself relieved from sleeping on the open deck *with the other convicts!*—The steamer's captain pointed to a small, but decent, lower hold mate's room, saying: "*By the General's orders!*"—and therein, Orlof found a pack of fur robes, a traveler's outfit, and the personal stores common to the country.

This charity restrained his defiant recklessness of heart! —On past the wild witching beauty of the Mantchurian shores, past fort and growing settlement, under embattled crags covered with old Tartar tombs, around the great bend, past the hostile Chinese frontier shores, from whence a dropping fire often galled them, the light boat forced its way. And, cool, cruel and sly as Count Fersen was in his deviltry, he secretly marvelled at Orlof's artistic work, his gentle, proud bearing, and the patient parrying of every insult!—He was baffled by the silence of the man helpless in the grasp of fate!—

"You can tell General Dachkof that I say *you are a superior scoundrel!*" said Fersen, at parting.—"*Here is five hundred roubles for you!*" Orlof thought of Olga, and smiled!—

CHAPTER III.

AT SITKA — A PRIMA DONNA IN DISGUISE — FIRST MATE M'MANN — THE CZAR'S PARTNER — "I CAN WAIT"—THE SALE OF AN EMPIRE.

Fedor Orlof's first impulse, when Count Fersen tossed him the bills, was to cast them back in the tyrant's face! But his good angel warned him in time to save *the back of an Orlof* from the prison sergeant's knout!

"*I am penniless!*" he reflected, as he sat on the deck of the returning boat, sweeping past the great icy peaks of the Yablanof, rising snow-capped to the north, and "these five bits of greasy green paper are *concrete power!* Should I reach Sitka, even this taunting offering of a cold brute might buy my way to helpless Olga Darine's presence! It may even serve to bribe the way for my letters!"——

And the ruined nobleman carefully sewed the hard won bills within the lining of the warm convict coat, which kind old Dachkof had ordered made, by covering one of *his own* with the *prisoner's cloth* and *fatal black patch!*——

Relieved from Fersen's exactions, delighting in the superb scenery of the Shilka, Fedor was light of heart, as the boat swept downward from the Nerchinsk.—Count Fersen's secret communications to General Dachkof were borne by Adjutant Vronsky, happy in his release. With growing annoyance, the handsome young soldier had noted Count Fersen's easy conquests of the bright eyed free lances who managed to share in the splendid luxuries of the Count's semi-imperial progress. The Emperor's favorite was not aware that *even he*

was *plucked, as he passed,* by these wily women who had not lost the arts of the reckless coquette on the far away lonely Siberian river mirroring the polar stars! —With wine and song—in furtive dalliance, Fersen relaxed his tiger-like nature!—*A Russian to the core!*——

It was in easy good humor, as he debarked at Nerchinsk, that Fersen turned his head away from the mischievous dark eyes of a handsome belle, clinging to his arm—and said patronizingly,

"*Hurry off the Seevoutch!* Vronsky! tell the General he has my carte blanche! I want everything done to help Maxutoff out over in Aliaska!—The Prince may not get his supplies from home next year. If the country is sold, Maxutoff will have to dismantle the whole territory! By the way, General Dachkof *can send this fellow Orlof over to Prince Maxutoff!* The scoundrel is *really accomplished!* I never saw a *finer report and sketches!* Just have Dachkof *transfer him* and his official papers *to Maxutoff's jurisdiction!* The Prince can send him back later to Siberia with the convict detachment which is there! *Make a special note of it!*"

Vronsky bowed in silence, as Count Fersen, murmuring a tender apology, gallantly aided the 'pet lamb' he guarded into a superb carriage. The Sultana of a month had soon forgotten the lonely grave of her brave husband, killed by fierce Mantchurians in the gloomy forests of the Ussuri! For she was being escorted home in royal state!—The envy of other Siberian Phrynes!—

Where the gold tasselled sword of the officer glitters, the silken rustle of the richly gowned woman adventuress is heard along Life's strange paths! Hand in hand, *war and gallantry* leave their traces from *tropic to pole!* Vronsky forgot his temporary eclipse as a military Don Juan, in sadly musing over poor Orlof's strange fate!—

The General's Adjutant treated the prisoner with a grave sympathy, for the weird horror of his unwitting crime was known in the upper official circles!—There seemed to be no hope for the victim of one mad hour!—

"How strange! At the *mere whim* of a passing official, this man's whole destiny is changed!"

Vronsky, gazing at Orlof, who had fifteen days of freedom before him in the downward trip to refresh his exhausted mental forces; did not dream that the tormenting caprice of relentless Fersen was leading the hopeless noble convict toward the *one* beloved being on earth whose lips now framed the name of *Fedor Orlof* —forgotten by all the gay world in his saddening downfall!—Past the sculptured crests of the purple Khingan mountains beyond the Mongolian frontier, the swift steamer sped away down stream in its arrowy flight!—At dawn, at noon, in the pearl gray of evening, or by the pale silvery moonlight, Fedor Orlof's eyes drank in the beauties of gorge and silent river reach,—of long wooded stretches of the fragrant birch and silvered maples, the air redolent with the odors of the wild Siberian roses! A lonely unawakened Paradise!——

In these blessed hours of ease, the wearied convict's heart lightened, his eye brightened, and his supple form renewed its youthful vigor. For a month and a half, he was freed from the daily brutality of the sentinels, and the hoarse bawling of the brutal sergeants! These bull-dogs of regimental life were distant! But the prisoner's life lay before him once more! '*Twenty years*' had stunned him when the judge decreed it!

Something in the virginal freedom and freshness of the great river, ever beloved by the wild Mongol Tartars, stole back into his tired heart, he forgot his sorrows, and he was again in his wonted mental poise when he

sought his poor hut, *unwelcomed* and *unnoticed*, as the steamer's fires died out at Nikolaevsk!—He had traversed almost an Empire's borders in his thankless task. The poor outcast heart was faithful even in sleep! For that night he dreamed that he clasped the Lost Love again to his heart!——

He woke with a start from wild delicious dreams of golden haired Olga Darine! Through the strange scenes of the Baikal, of the Chinese border, with its savage tribes, wild beauty and varied panorama, he wandered, haunted by the darling face of his lost love! But the singing bugles of reveille called him again to the inspection line!—It was a *cruel awakening*, yet he was once more near Pierre Lefranc! The very thought of the alert cunning Frenchman renewed his courage, as, in the chill air of dawn, he realized again his *own* felon station!——

"*Here's our fine gentleman again,*" jeered the Corporal and fierce Sergeant, and even the peasant sentinel *too*, had his coarse insult! *The upstart is always a brute at heart!* The brute at heart is a brutal taskmaster!

Lingering alone, waiting for orders, in his squalid hut till noon, Orlof sprang forward nimbly, as a cossack rider reined up at the hut door, ordering him to report at once at headquarters!

"*Was it an eddy in the current of Fate!* Whither would it bear him away!"

He was in ignorance of Fersen's orders,—for Vronsky's military prudence had not been violated.—Ready in the stream, lay the waiting "Seevoutch," her black sides gleaming, and her grinning ports open!—The blue Peter at the mast head told of sailing orders. The river's bosom was alive with boats and tugs flitting about the deeply laden cruiser.—And, as yet, *no sign of Pierre*

Lefranc! Hastily ushered into General Dachkof's working room, Orlof started as he beheld convict Lefranc, seated at ease, working at a table *with the Adjutant!* —The ex-naval officer was aiding the Adjutant in sealing huge bundles of those voluminous papers which the Russian official so dearly loves.

The General returned Orlof's smart salute in a grave silence. Referring to the notes of his Adjutant, he broke the silence in reading, while the prisoner's very heart stopped beating!—*His fate awaited him!*

"No. 24190!" he read from a memorandum order, "you are hereby transferred to the jurisdiction of His Excellency Governor General Prince Maxutoff, *of Aliaska!*—You will be embarked on the corvette at nightfall. She sails on the morning tide. Adjutant Vronsky will furnish you with all the necessaries of the voyage. You are now warned that any attempt at escape will be punished *with death!*——

By the order of His Excellency Count Fersen, Imperial Inspector of Prisons!"—

Fedor Orlof bowed in silence, but met a furtive glance of Pierre Lefranc's eyes *with a wild secret joy!* The path of a river life was opening out before him! Over the far storm-swept Ochotsk through the hovering fogs of Behring Sea, the furrowed wake of the swift steamer left a hopeless prison life alone behind him. But there, though he left the rich, enchanting Amur valley, draining unknown empires and destined to be the home yet of happy millions, *there*, over the icy unknown seas, the beacon of Olga Darine's eyes led him on to a secret happiness,—a living hope!

Welcome the rough mountains—the glacier guarded shores,—the rain clouded clime, the lonely forests and silent rocky inlets!—There in far Aliaska, peopled by

rude savages and squalid half-breds,—behind the guarded doors of Baranoff's old manorial castle, perched high on its rocky hill in Sitka Bay, was imprisoned the angel faced woman whose voice thrilled yet in his heart!

As he he stood waiting, General Dachkof said: "Orlof, you take a good *prison* character with you!—On your voyage, you will assist this man in the care of the government supplies and their distribution.—You will learn your duties from Lefranc, from whom you can learn much of Alaska! You will not leave your cabin here until conducted on board at sundown. *Here!*" the old General kindly extended a packet.

When the "Seevoutch" was gliding out over the delta bar, and the shores of Siberia were fading forever from his sight, the tears came to Orlof's eyes, as he examined the little bundle!—It contained a purse with a liberal rouleau of gold imperials, and the few words in the General's *own* handwriting were more precious than the welcome treasure!—The whole was concealed in several bundles of Dachkof's best cigars.

The scrawl bore the words: "I have sent a few words to Maxutoff in your behalf. You may earn his favor! Be of good cheer! *I knew and honored your father!*"—

And keeping this a secret, even from Pierre Lefranc, Orlof would fain have thanked the warm hearted old soldier, whose fear of official spies had prevented more open kindnesses. His eyes were clouded, as he read the note.

"The *only* human heart moved in kindness toward the saddest of men! Hail, to you! brave old Dachkof!" cried Orlof, as the staunch steamer darted over the roughened Ochotsk. He turned cheerfully to his daily work.—

Pierre Lefranc was admitted to the chart and navi-

gating room in the necessary freedom of his duties. Hour by hour, the re-united comrades pored over the maps of the vast North Pacific!

"We must know every nook of the shores on *both* sides!" counseled Lefranc.

"Use every moment in acquiring information! We know not *where* Fate may lead us! Keep your ears open in the presence of the officers! Learn even from the sailors! We are to skirt Khamschatka on this voyage, leaving stores at Petropauloski, then by Copper Islands, sweep over to Fort Tongass, Wrangel and Sitka. The Governor General may need such a man as you as tutor to the little Princess of Alaska! I will probably be sent to close up the constructions at Kodiak. We could do nothing this winter, but I will concert with McMann, and next season we must scheme to be together! Then we can make a dash! It is now *one* future,—*one* fate,—*one* common interest,—the road to Freedom! *We must escape!*"

It was in the middle of September, when the "Seevoutch" drew away from the dangerous shallows of the Straits of Tartary. At a rude settlement on wild Saghalien Island,—the disputed prey of Japan and Russia,—Fedor Orlof marked crowds of dejected wretches toiling in the coal mines, under the guard of the most brutal of the White Czar's soldiery.

Escape was there none for these poor wretches,—the gloomy interior of the great Island, being peopled by the wild hairy Ainus, who were officially encouraged to bring the *heads* of fugitive prisoners to the camp!—— Only the door of the grave!—the oblivion of the common lime pit, awaited the condemned!—And the hideous mockery of the officially forced marriage of the men and women prisoners stained even the Muscovite code! The

stranger wretches of the two sexes were turned in to a common room, in equal numbers, to choose their mates for life, those remaining unmated being told off in a hasty despotic selection, *after an hour* by the jeering tyrants!

"Yes!—Yes!—there are *worse* hells than the Baikal mines or the prison pens of the Amur!" mused Orlof, as the corvette steamed north.

"The Inferno of Saghalien has *no parallel* in human horrors!—It is the gate of an eternal hell!"—

Sharing in Lefranc's singular status of the free run of the whole ship, Fedor Orlof spent his idle hours in self-commune and silently evolved his personal plans for the future!—The possession of Fersen's brutally given notes and manly old Dachkof's gold would, perhaps, enable him to open communication with his long-lost love! In the first days of their voyage, Fedor keenly watched Pierre Lefranc's attitude toward the officers. The convict noble finally decided to *seal* his heart-feelings from Lefranc!—For, though blood-stained his hand, Orlof still retained the haughty pride of a born Russian noble! He was separated from the merely subaltern naval officers by his old caste! He scorned to seek the notice of his Commander! This stern officer knew of Orlof's rank and his untoward fortunes.—With cold deference to the past social status of the unfortunate noble, he had given orders to spare "the prisoner" Orlof any unnecessary annoyance, and his word was law! Fedor was mutely grateful.—

"It is *hard enough,* poor devil," mused the Commander, as he regarded Fedor, alone with his sorrows peering out into the dim gray horison of fleeting fog banks! The sailor recked not that under Fedor's melancholy, placid features the maddest fever of his unhappy life

thrilled every vein! To see beloved Olga again—his *lost* Olga!—To hear her voice *once more!* This was Orlof's hourly prayer, and under the blue Pole star he neared the haven of his dreams!—The days sped quickly by!—

Leaning over the vessel's rail, watching the crystal, foaming green waves break sharply on the sturdy oaken ribs of the corvette,—Fedor realized that the Star of Hope's rays, twinkling in the Arctic night, spoke only to him of the innocent woman *who had* shared his untoward fate! Though torn from his arms, it was *his* crime alone which had dragged her down,—her unselfish love had brought her, in innocence, under the ban of the secret police! For Olga Darine could be no *common* criminal! Even *in Russia* her punishment with death would have been an outrage! What had been her prison life? Did secret oppressions follow her strange pathway? How had she drifted to New Archangel's old castled steep? Was it with a happy heart at relief from the course indignities of daily prison life that she lingered, a caged song-bird, in Baranoff's stronghold on the cliff of Sitka? The unanswering stars mocked his grief!

"I shall soon know the *very worst!*—Merciful God!—Grant that I may not meet her *ruined, degraded,* her fair flower of womanhood trampled in the mire of sin!"—Fedor Orlof counted the passing hours till it seemed that in his tense mental exaltation he could bring back the one beloved face of all womanhood! They had torn away all his belongings in the police search! Her picture glowed in his *faithful heart* alone!—

With all a gentleman's scorn, he marked the degradation of Pierre Lefranc's personal character! The mercurial Frenchman, the grandson of a military refugee,

was fain to flatter and fawn upon the officers of rank.—It was the convict's usual downward path!—Even the material comforts of the table seemed to be an object of Lefranc's daily strategy!—Orlof stood haughtily aloof from this abasing attitude of Lefranc, who meanly manoeuvred for such little concessions!—"I fancy his grandmother was merely some *camp follower!*" bitterly thought Fedor, who ate in silence of his sailor ration, the Czar's black bread, unsweetened tea and cabbage soup alone! It is the soldier and sailor's dole. "I have earned it *in Siberia!* I will earn it bitterly in *Aliaska!* What will they do with me?" But the stars answered him not!

The "Seevoutch" dashed northward, her guns lashed and ports closed, to where the lazy schools of huge right whales tumbled around in the swift currents, sweeping past shovel-shaped Cape Lopatka.—To the northwest a huge extinct volcano towered sixteen thousand feet in air, hanging in a distant menace over the wild, lonely point!—It was the very acme of desolation!—A forgotten land!—

"We are going to run into Petropauloski for Prince Serge Zubow," said the gossip Frenchman, as the two friends crouched one day under the lee of the companion way on the gun deck.

"Who is *this Zubow?*" asked Orlof, wearily.

"He is a rich Eastern Siberian noble," said Lefranc,—"half savage,—half courtier,—who has long had some great speculations in fur trading along the frozen northern coasts! He and his Petersburg agent, Anton Phillippi, are now making an annual round of inspection. It is easy for him to work his will unrestrained here. He is enormously rich! A few thousand golden roubles lost at play to an official,—a few dozen baskets

of champagne and a case of Havanas to a commander, —will always carry him smoothly along! He bribes, bullies, buys and cajoles! He boasts a half dozen followers from Tomsk, and some fierce attendant renegades! A Circassian murderer and a Turkestan fanatic were his only friendly associates when he came over to Kodiak two years ago!"—

"You *know* him, *then?*" said Orlof, with a vague distrust.—Something in the description chilled the proud convict. It was a premonition. "May God grant that I do not fall under *his* domination!"—thought Fedor. "Has he any *official position?*"—It was an anxious moment!

"None, beyond the usual half dozen sinecure titles which all highly placed Russians seem to affect!" lightly said Lefranc, in reply. "I have had no *direct* dealings with him, but when McMann was sick in hospital,—*they* had some illicit fur and rum transactions. I acted, however, as their confidential interpreter!—He is a wild man!"

"Can I really trust *my* fate to Lefranc?" mused Orlof, as the gunboat ran into the splendid bay of Avatcha. "His term of imprisonment has not *long to run!*—He is under no doom or future disability! If he ever *had* character, he has sunk *now* to be a mere lick-spittle for those over him!—He never had a real social position to lose! Why is he not *well enough off*, hovering around any of these corrupt officials? And yet, *this* man may be the means of aiding my escape! He has a great latitude of movement. He will be practically unwatched. If he goes to *Sitka* he will be allowed the free run of the town, and *I*," bitterly thought Orlof, "must perhaps linger penned in a convict barrack,

within the very sound of *Olga's voice!* I *must* use this man's doubtful friendship!"—

In self-condemnation Orlof ground his teeth in impotent rage, as he noticed the slight but unmistakable air of superiority daily assumed by Lefranc!—It was the coarse reminder that the naval criminal was not at least a *blood*-stained felon!—

It was easy for the familiar Lefranc to pick up the gossip of the ship. With ready compliance he toiled at his chart work and the computations in the navigator's rooms, while the absent ward-room officers dallied over cards, cigarettes and steaming vodki punch in utter laziness!—He knew how to ingratiate—to wheedle!

"We will only stay one day here at this port! Ah! *There* come the port officers!" cried Pierre, as the two convicts gazed out upon the beautiful silent valley. —Hemmed in with mountains, the one considerable port of Khamschatka boasted as ornament a great Greek church, with fantastically colored roofs of red and green. Around this, the houses of the officers were bowered in straggling gardens.—

The government workshops and arsenals were crowded with loungers, and the shining bayonets of the sentries glittered proudly on the heavy shore batteries.—The sparkling waters were alive with cod, swarming golden king salmon and great shoals of beautiful sea trout leaping in wanton frolic into the pale sunlight.—The great blue and white cross ensign of the Romanoffs swung lazily in pride from the forts.—

As the heavy double-banked port barge swept alongside, Orlof thought of the battle day when six great French and English warships rained a storm of shot upon the heroic defenders of this poor little Arctic village!—When the landing parties rushed back pellmell

to their boats, six score red-coated English invaders lay dead upon the chilly moss of the roadways! A great day for the brave Russians! The glory of victory hovered in the Arctic still!—

"Would to God that *I* had died here, musket in hand, *even a humble soldier,* in the ranks of the Czar! For *now,* I wear only the convict patch,—*the badge of shame!*"

There were bitter tears in Fedor's eyes as he hastened away, for the fur-coated visiting gentry were now thronging the deck, as they swarmed up from the great barge. All were eager for that debauch which was destined to enliven the night hours until the corvette sailed.—

"Here, *you convict fellow!* Take these down to *my state room!*" suddenly cried a sturdy man of thirty, whose priceless black sable collar and cuffs indicated opulence.—He tossed some hand bundles roughly toward Orlof, who stood stunned and motionless.—The stranger's great muscular frame, heavy under face, thin moustache, piercing black eyes and bold harsh voice were the marks of an inland noble of Tartar blood. Orlof hesitated and was motionless.—

"Why don't you jump, *hound,*" yelled the infuriated noble, as Fedor's face grew pale with silent rage.—

"I am the *Czar's prisoner,* not *your servant!*" quietly said Orlof,—his eyes gleaming as coldly as the Pole star's wintry glinting rays.—It was a challenge to fate!—

"I'll have you *knouted,* you scum!" raged the infuriated Zubow, as he sprang forward, his fist clenched, to where Orlof, with folded arms, measured the distance to to the ship's side!—*A single blow!*—

He would snatch the marine's musket, drive the bayonet through the brute's heart, and then, *then,* the green icy water was twenty fathom deep! If the guard fired

a volley, sooner then, Death's welcome release! For no man had ever struck an Orlof and *lived to boast!*—

Lefranc, with a skillful movement glided, between the two young men. The shore officers, the portly priest, and one or two rich peasant merchants stood aghast at the sight!

The silence was broken by Commander Linieff's stern voice, crying: "*Hold off! Zubow!* We are on the high seas! *That man is under my orders alone!* He has as much right on the ship as *you* have!—And I will protect him!"

"*Here!*" said Lineiff to a knot of gaping sailors on the taffrail, "get all his baggage off the deck!"

"*May I show you now your cabin?*" said the Commander to Prince Zubow, who bowed and followed him without a word. At the door of the Commander's great saloon, the Tartar bully turned,—and cast back a glance of deadly hatred at stately Orlof, leaning against a gun. "I will mark that baby face of yours *yet*, convict dog!" he growled, "I've seen that countenance before at Petersburg,—at the Clubs,—I'm sure. Wait! *Wait!*" he muttered.——And Fedor was under the Doom of Hate!—

"This is *most* unfortunate!" murmured Lefranc, when the distant official party were gathered around their wine in the cabins.—The main decks were deserted. Orlof's heart was thrilling yet with thankful gratitude to the bluff manly sailor.

"See here, Pierre," he said, turning away, "You may forget you were born a gentleman!—*I can not!*"

Pierre Lefranc did forget!

Two days later, the fleet corvette was skimming along the white-cliffed peninsula, under the shadow of the great volcano peaks, where fretful flash and straggling

smoke told of the struggling inner fires of mother earth. —There were fiercer flames burning in Fedor Orlof's heart! The light of an abject despair consumed him! He shunned the face of man, and lingered alone in the dingy boatswain's stowage closet assigned to him. With malicious wit, the resentful Prince Zubow sought out Lefranc in the evening shadows. He had a tool ready for his vengeance.

"Who is this mysterious *fine gentleman?*" demanded the imperious Zubow.

With a Frenchman's adroitness, Pierre hesitated. —He would get Zubow more or less in his power!

"What do you wish to know, Prince?"—he hesitated.

"*Look here,* my friend! I have a thousand rouble golden rouleau for you, if you *quicken* your memory!—All you scoundrels are chums! You know all each other's lies—and also habitually spy on your comrades!"

"Let me *see* the gold!" whispered Lefranc, as the shades of night hid the blushes on his Judas cheek. In a few moments, the Prince thrust the gold in the convict's hands! In half an hour his eyes glistening with victorious passion, Zubow strode back to the cabin.

"Ah! I have him! I know *my* course!"—

—"*An Orlof!* I will see that ivory back of his, bleed under the spiked lash! Maxutoff will give him up to me! The brute! I will take the defiance out of his saucy eyes! He shall feel Zubow's heel grinding that handsome face!" And God heard this murderous oath! Mysterious His ways!

Basely as Lefranc lowered himself for the Tartar's gold, he had forgotten to connect the unhappy Orlof with the witching star, now obscured by Arctic darkness, the world-famous Petersburg prima donna! For

Zubow had *only* questioned him on every detail of Orlof's tragic deed!

"I will keep that deed ever *fresh* in his mind!" raved Zubow, "he shall hear his uncle's name at every lash!"

The doom of the helpless! The tryant's menace!

When the gray dawn lit up the decks, where the two men,—once gentlemen of an imperial mess,—shared the tin pannikins of the bearded sailor peasants Pierre Lefranc's unstable eyes dropped before Orlof's fearless gaze. The hours glided by with no reference to the imperious man, now a lurking tiger waiting a revenge! —The rattling anchor dropped at last in the bay of Behring Island. The shores of the lonely mountain group were covered with a vast wallowing herd of sea bears, whose priceless fur was destined to enrich future daring schemers. In an hour, Prince Zubow landed with the Commander.—Orlof, indifferent to aught but Olga Darine, deigned not to ask permission to land, but Lefranc followed slyly in the train of Zubow! It had been *even so* at Copper Island, the neighboring smaller isle of the Commander group!—Fedor was ignorant of the growing hunger of Lefranc for *more* of Zubow's gold,—and of the quick-witted Tartar's intention to make the talented convict useful in vast future plans not yet thoroughly formulated!—It was indeed a slavish means of nearing his freedom! But Pierre thought "*McMann may fail me!* This wild, ignorant Croesus will need my brains!"

And so Lefranc decided, as he fingered the jingling golden imperials:—

"Orlof *need not know all!* He is an impracticable fool!"

It was easy for the Judas to find law and logic in his mean betrayal of the hapless lover! Alone, on the deck,

Fedor Orlof could see on the mountain, Behring's Cross! He thought of the untoward fate of the great navigator. The fearless confidant of an Empress' world-compelling schemes!—After great honor and destruction signalized his name, Vitus Behring's stricken ship's company saw him perish here miserably on December 8, 1741. Held in the grasp of ice and storm,—ravaged by the awful misery of the scurvy,—his dying eyes closed within the very sight of his stranded bark! The heroic Dane, hiding in a hollow, dug to claim the friendly warmth of the earth, was half covered with the earth *sliding down on him*, before he closed his weary eyes!

"The meed of glorious deeds," bitterly mused Orlof, —"*A dog's death!* An incredible hardship, crossing Siberia in 1728,—building with rude help the first two ships in the North Pacific at Petropauloski,—Behring and Tchirikof, (self-devoted), carried out the imperial mandates of the savage genius of Peter the Great! For it was Peter's own hand, relaxing in death, which traced the plan for his lion-hearted women successors to push on in the conquest of Asia, as well as to sweep to the Dardanelles!

The rude Alexander of the North had a prophetic brain! Keener in intellect than the godlike young Greek soldier, he aspired to grasp Asia, and even to rule the unprotected shores of North America. Unknown seas stopped not his ambitions! Faith, imperial pride, a tyrant's greed of conquest and a dream of the mightiest future realm on earth, to be ruled by his line, under the Russian flag,—led Peter to study the story of the hardy Cossack, Deschnew.—The world had forgotten the daring savage, Deschnew, who,—rudely furnished forth,—burst, *first*, into the Arctic Ocean, through its lonely Pacific sea gates! It was in 1648, that the

unknown Cossack sought, though ignorant of navigation, for the fabled straits of Anian! He looked for the land of the great northern mystery, with "its Anian Strait and silver mountains, and divers other fabulous tales!" —The lonely northern Colossus, the gigantic-minded Peter, left *secret orders* for the exploration which gave Vitus Behring's name later to the Cossack's discovery. Thirteen years of sailing in unknown seas, gave Behring only *a lonely grave*, and *to-day* the Straits of Deschnew bear the intrepid Dane's name! *Neither* found the fabled treasures! The heirship of Behring has swept Deschnew's name into the oblivion of forgetfulness. And *stranger's hands* reaped the hidden golden harvest!"

As Fedor Orlof mused, around the headland, a heavy-sparred American whaler suddenly appeared,—driving along under full sail. She hoisted her colors in courtly salute to the corvette, and was soon lost in the flying scud!—

Orlof went to his den and sunk his head in his hands! It was the mockery of fate!

When Lefranc returned, he was greatly agitated at the news of the passing whaler!

"It may *even* have been the *Reindeer*!" he cried, "McMann has often run in here for a removal of hidden otter furs, seal skins and private barter, secreted to keep off the local officers!—A man should be allowed to steal who has to serve the Emperor *here! But*, Orlof," he continued, "I find this Prince Zubow has a vast *secret influence!* Phillippi tells me we are to run up to Plover Bay and Behring Straits to take on the furs, ivory and whalebone belonging to this great schemer! He *must* have a great hold on Maxutoff!—There are some Yankee ships now along the Ochotsk Sea and on

the north coast of Khamschatka! These bold fools think to lay a telegraph around the coast to connect with Europe! It is a gigantic madness, but *magnificent!* We now may have a chance later to sneak on board of one of them at Plover Bay or the straits,—but I fear the Americans might be forced to give us up again!—They need to keep the good will of the Starosts of the villages and all our port governors. Only a bold adventurer like McMann can save us! He is *hand and glove* with Prince Zubow!"——

Orlof's heart sank.—

"Then *good-bye to my liberty*,—Pierre!" said Orlof.—"The grave *alone* is open to me! This deadly man has marked me *even now* for his vengeance!"—

"Oh, he is but a rough Tartar brute! He will *forget* his rage when he lands among the complaisant beauties of Baranoff castle!—No wilder, gayer bacchantes ever raised the chant of Love's madness than these dark-eyed women,—social exiles,—who pine in idle companionship around gentle Princess Beatrice Maxutoff! Zubow will be the Prince Charming of every feast and gay rout in the huge ball room on the rocky hill! He may *not* forgive, but he *will* forget!" replied Lefranc. "It is the Tartar roughness! That's all!"

"*I hope so*, gloomily said Orlof, as he walked away with a strange foreshadowing of future disaster.—As the launch swept up, and the noisy party clattered on deck, Orlof saw Zubow's triumphant leer, when the tipsy Prince fixed a malignant glance on him.—

"He may not, however, be able to *harm* me! The Czar's prisoner will be tied to his daily toil!"

A lightning dart seemed suddenly to rend his heart as he stood transfixed.—

"*My God! Olga!* There, *alone*, with no one to pro-

tect her! *Does* he know? *Can* he know,—her history?"

As he walked down the gun deck, he noted the Prince whispering to his sleek confidant, Anton Phillippi, *the Fur King!*—They were grinning and laughing. A too faithful memory lifted the veil of Fedor's lonely convict years! Raised above all mercantile acquaintance at home, by his rank, Fedor Orlof had only distantly heard, in his Petersburg days, of the wild extravagance of the sleek speculator whose face he had marked in these last days. He slowly recognized Phillippi, bending over the cabin table strewn with gold, in a gambler's eagerness, as he ventured *his craft* against Zubow's dashing *recklessness!* The cabin's open door showed him the envious naval officers watching this high play!—

"I have surely seen his face *before!* Ah! God! *It was at the Opera!* If *he*, this merchant prince, should remember *Olga!*" And Orlof prayed to God that some secret order of the vengeful Czarevitch might keep Olga Darine hidden from these two powerful intriguants.

"*God keep my helpless beloved!*" he groaned in his anguish.

"Had Phillippi *recognized* him? Perhaps!" and the convict, with a shudder, remembered that the mad Count Fedor Orlof's name was on every one's tongue in Petersburg at that former time. This fur stealing conspirator might even know the great Jewish money lenders who helped to betray him *at the last*, to the Grand Duke!

For five days, the agitated prisoner hid himself as far as it was possible, while the 'Seevoutch' battled to the north, and the gray dawn of the sixth day showed him the vessel, at anchor, in the beautiful harbor of arctic Plover Bay, hemmed in with its high protecting mountains. Before them—on the shore, the Tchuktche tents

of whalebone ribs, covered with sewn skins, were surrounded by groups of the savage natives, squalid, in their fur robes, and surrounded by knots of awkward, hulking reindeer! A stay of a few hours to receive furs and ivory, caused Commander Linieff to have a sudden fancy for a sketch of the outré scene!—At his personal order, Fedor Orlof, provided from the chart room with materials, toiled until the paddle wheels began to revolve after the anchor had been catted. Intent upon his work, Orlof, who had the eye of an artist, was suddenly made the centre of an admiring circle. Commander Linieff was astonished at the convict's ready skill and, turning his back, with warm approval disappeared in his cabin.——

While Orlof had touched up the last lights and shades, a rude hand suddenly snatched away his sketch block.—Several officers colored with shame, as, with a malignant sneer, Prince Zubow handed it around.

"This fellow draws well enough! Perhaps, he was a *forger* as well as *murderer!*"

Orlof's face became purple with a sudden rush of blood! When the youngest officer timidly handed back the drawing,—as the ship was speeding out of the harbor,—as Zubow was glaring in expectancy at the tortured noble,—with a steady stride, Fedor approached the vessel's side and tossed the drawing into the foamy wake of the wheel! He then turned back, *in silence*, with a stony face! The Tartar rushed upon him.—

"Dog, *you have dared!*" cried Zubow, blind with passion. "*Stop there, Prince!*" harshly cried the disgusted Officer of the Deck, "If I report this scene to Commander Linieff, *it will put you and me up at ten paces!* Your conduct is *unworthy of a man!*"

The Tartar ruffian strode away in silence, as the officer approached Fedor Orlof, and said: "Can you not

reproduce this from *memory?* Do your best, my poor man! *We all wish it!*"

A suspicious moisture gleamed in Orlof's eye, as, with a fresh sketch block, the scene soon grew into pictured life once more, under his flying fingers.—

From that moment until the "Seevoutch" reached Sitka Harbor, Prince Zubow *never faced* the now desperate man.—The corvette next day steamed into the narrow arctic inlet with its three midway islands in the thirty-seven miles of the strait through which, *for the first time,* Orlof gazed into the mystic waters, marked here and there with a floating iceberg, stretching in silence to the unreached North Pole! It was the unearthy boundary of those unknown seas whose dark mysteries have tempted human sacrifice since the days when Europe was driven mad by the noble Venetian Marco Polo, whose story of Xipangu and Kublai Khan's magnificence were seemingly incredible!—

But Marco Polo's *treasures of Cathay* were *visible* on his return, and feasted the eyes of the brave Venetians, in the storied year 1295!—To reach the fabulous wealth of Cathay and Xipangu, the world's adventurers soon dared all! While Mendez Pinto's tales led William Adams to be the English Columbus of Japan, stout Sir Hugh Willoughby, Barentz, and other heroes had died miserably in these unknown icy seas. *A fool's quest!* Gold! Always *Gold!*

Looking at East Cape's rocky hill, with its jutting spires of crags in the chill water marking Asia's extremity,—Fedor Orlof could *also* turn his eyes to Cape Prince of Wales, which marked the *first* land of America, *his new prison home,*—Aliaska!—For this ragged peak jutting out was joined by a stretch of low land to the

forbidding rude hills of Russian America.—There he would be the Czar's forgotten slave!—And—*Olga*—

Three small islands, anchored in the current sweeping from the mystic Arctic Ocean, seemed to be stepping stones for great Peter's leap toward America! And the stout hearted Empress widow had sent his flag over on its iron rule!

"Wonderful man!" mused Orlof, as the steamer's prow was turned toward Kodiak. "The treasures he sought here have been garnered *only* by the wily Americans! For through this narrow gateway Captain Boys, in the Yankee whaler "Superior," in 1848, first led the way to the moving treasures of the ungleaned bowhead whale schools! Three hundred vessels following within *two years*, sailed out of Behring Strait with eighteen millions of dollars in cargoes of oil and bone! This was the *real treasure!* "*Where is the fool's gold?*" Under the fitful gleam of the flashing Northern Lights, moody Orlof paced the deck, in marvel at the old world's mad thirst for treasure, as the ship went speeding on to Kodiak! He little recked that the "Seevoutch" was dashing on toward an inlet where the very *cliffs* were crumbling quartz, *richly seamed with the long sought gold!* The dark secret was yet hidden!—

While through the gray fog of the storm-swept Behring Sea, the Prybiloffs loomed up, with their beaches packed with the bellowing fur seals, Orlof wondered at the savage life of the floating ice floes. The spoils of lumbering white bears,—human looking seals, their mermaid-like heads darting above the water,—weird giant sea cows, and uncouth walrus, white tusked and bearded,—as well as wolf, brown bear, black, blue and silver fox, had been added to the plunder of the vessel's landings! Swinging at anchor at last in Kodiak harbor, Orlof listened to Pierre Lefranc's uneasy regrets. The hand of a traitor's Destiny had smit-

ten him,—and confidence was a thing of the Past! Orlof was finally suspicious!

"I am not to be *permitted to land*, Fedor!" the Gaul faltered, "Prince Maxutoff has sent orders for me to be brought down to Sitka!—Some future transfer of the great American Kingdom of the Czar must be in view! *I may never meet McMann again!* He may lose his treasure island! I may die under the rule of the jailer! Who knows if my order of release will ever come!——

The bustle of conference, the sound of revelry, floated off from the shores of St. Paul! Kodiak's frowning hills now hung over them. It was the last stop! Several glittering officials now joined the noisy revellers in the ward room, as passengers, when the "Seevoutch" turned her prow to Sitka! The day of facing his fate rapidly neared Fedor Orlof,—now a prey to every doubt and fear!

Pierre Lefranc shunned him now at night! The open-hearted noble, living only on his sorrows, dreamed not that the debased Frenchman was *nightly conspiring* with Prince Zubow! *It was indeed so!* The impetuous Tartar millionaire's brain was strong and rugged. His mental self-will was as wildly unrestrained as the breezes sweeping down the Obi and Yenisei over his native Steppes!—And his ready gold enslaved Lefranc.——

Brooking no restraint, aware of the immense diffusion of the Czar's power, Serge Zubow had easily bought his way everywhere in victory! His molten gold, bearing the Czar's stamp, corrupted the very haughtiest officials of the Crown!

"Let these official fools laugh, sun themselves in woman's flickering smile, battle over the green board, or play the water fly of gaudy court shows,—*I* am marching straight onward to an equal rank with the Demidoffs and Galitzins! For my *gold!*" he laughed, "opens woman's heart, blinds

justice and bends these improvident officials as my pliant tools! *I shall conquer!*" ——

Under pretense of using Lefranc to design a vessel for their future Ochotsk trade, Anton Phillippi and Prince Serge Zubow spent the evenings of the five days' run from Kodiak to Sitka, closeted with the pliant Frenchman! There was a freemasonry of easy deviltry which led the partners to throw off the mask!

"Gregory Maxutoff is an *old friend* of mine," cried Zubow, "if you serve us in devotion, I will make your prison chains golden!"

"Ma foi! *Load them on, now*, Prince! *I can bear them!*" smiled Lefranc, musing on the uselessness of Fedor Orlof's companionship to him. For, as on the morn they would enter Sitka harbor,—Anton Phillippi, cool and wise, mused upon the far reaching plans which the two scoundrels had laid to *defraud the Imperial Treasury*,—as well as to scramble for all possible *rights and concessions* before foggy Alaska would be *transferred to the United States!*

"Any contracts, franchises, deeds or entries made under our Imperial law will hold *after the transfer*, Serge!" said Phillippi, when Lefranc sneaked back to his humble den with lonely Fedor Orlof. The ex-guardsman, proudly wrapped in the isolation of his sorrow, deigned not to question Pierre.

"Giving his scientific knowledge in return for broken meats, a little wine, a handful of cigars and a few roubles! French complaisance bought with *a pastry cook's bribe!*"—

And yet, Fedor Orlof bided his time in peace,—for even *this parasite* was his *superior* now!—*He* bore no ban for life, and, on *his* favor, might hang the slender line of communication with poor Olga, once the object of a Crown Prince's advances!——

"Mark me! Phillippi," said Zubow, slowly, as he drained a huge glass of vodki and water, when Sitka harbor

lights were seen twinkling in the far south, "We must *separate* these prisoners! Lefranc is *very adroit*, curse him! If we are going to hide the *stolen tribute furs* and get them to a *foreign market*, this fellow is a good navigator and indispensable to us! As an ex-convict, no one *would believe his story!* I am afraid of Prince Maxutoff!——He is *pliant* enough, but he has foolish notions about '*betraying the Emperor*' and all *such nonsense!* It is giant stake to play for! Besides, Beatrice Maxutoff is *no fool!* I *never* could hoodwink the Princess! Her clear, womanly eyes pierce my very soul! Devil take her? She's a *good woman* and *diamonds* will not *shut her eyes!* I can *not* manage her!"—

"Do not *fret*, Serge," answered the Fur King.—This Orlof is bold and spirited. *Tempt him to escape!* An extra bottle of vodki, a few Imperials, and the sentinel will drop him with *an ounce ball in his brain!* This French scoundrel will betray him,—we can leave the way apparently open for an attempted escape!—I am sorry *though* for Orlof! He is as brave as an eagle of the Caucasus! —But his rank and high birth make him feel his shame *bitterly!*—We only need *one* of these men! Mark me! He will *die*, but *never* stoop or cringe! Yes, Serge," concluded Anton, dallying with a fresh cigarette, "Kill him off, *in some quiet way!*"——

"Stay!" hoarsely cried Zubow, whose unslaked revenge was flooding his brain with a fiery tide, "McMann will run his whaler in here to get my orders about carrying off our otters and ivory lying now at Anadyr Gulf! I will not put myself *in this Lefranc's power!* I'll get Aleck McMann to *put Orlof out of the way!* Now, *first*, to separate them! Gregory Maxutoff is a lunatic on the subject of Aliaskan gold! He thinks the Emperor will make him Prince of Alaska if he finds it! He insists that the most promising fields should be located before any treaty of cession is signed.—Of course, the Emperor would *then* only get his tenth, and

Maxutoff hopes to hold the grants himself and leave *his wife* rich, and that pretty fay, Irma, a splendid future dowry!—The little Princess would be a star in Russia! It is true, there is a little gold always to be traded for among the Eskimo!—I will tell Prince Gregory that this Orlof fellow is an *expert* in all the latest gold mining science, and has explored the Siberian gold fields!—*It is true!*—Linieff told me that Orlof's report on the mines was a blessing to Count Fersen.—Maxutoff will then send the dandy at once away on *some fool's errand,* if I ask!—I will then reach him,—*reach him,* if he were on ice floe in the Arctic! No man ever braved Serge Zubow, *and lived!*"——

"Don't let that Tartar fury of yours *blind* you, Serge!—Do you forget that *I* have made you the *Czar's partner?* Siberia's furs,——the Behring seals and otters, ivory and priceless fox skins——the million roubles worth is almost ours! *Curb your fury!* We wish to ship our '*private dividends*' to China, Japan, or even America! As for your *revenge,—don't be a fool!*—It may cost us too dear!"—

"*I can wait,*" growled Zubow, as the "Seevoutch" ran into Sitka Sound and anchored for the night, before threading the dangerous labyrinth of sunken rocks and islands masking New Archangel. The tall form of Orlof, an uneasy watcher of the night, met Zubow's gaze, as the Fur King left him, laughingly whispering, "Now, don't be a fool! We want *no midnight duel to the death!* Think of that *lovely prima donna in disguise!*" Zubow *started!* The lurking devil in him, woke, as, showing his grinning, white teeth, he strode to his cabin and smilingly drained a glass of cognac, "*To the Prima Donna!*"

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE SITKA CHURCH—THE LITTLE PRINCESS OF ALASKA FINDS A LOST LOVER—IN THE GOVERNOR'S WORKING ROOM—THE ESKIMO'S STORY—UNKNOWN SEAS—THE ISLAND SURVEY—A NEW MONTE CRISTO—OLGA DARINE'S TRUST.

When Fedor Orlof awoke to the day he had long waited for in his heart hunger, he sprang eagerly to the ship's side. There in the lovely bay, below Mount Edgecumbe's snow-filled crater, lay the long jutting point, with its great three-storied castle proudly dominating the native huts stretched along a dreary lake. High perched on the rocky cliff, over Baranoff's huge stronghold, the blue and white St. Andrew's cross spoke of that mighty power whose iron hand stretched thousands of miles over Siberian wastes to grasp here the closed seas of Behring!—

Dark masses of gloomy straggling trees clung to the castle cliffs. To the right under the protecting guns of the mansion fortress, the towers of the great cruciform Greek church arose on the thin blue air!—It was a great feast day of his national creed!

As the musical bells swelled out in their solemn peals, Fedor Orlof's eyes filled with tears!—*For he had no part in God's blessed peace!*—No happy voice within him whispered of a Savior's love!—Forgiveness of the past he dared not hope for, as his haggard eyes rested on the hand which smote his brave old kinsman on that night of fatal madness!—He was unshriven—unforgiven!—Not for him God's holy peace!—

The ship's boats were soon lowered, and the boatswain's call mustered the crew to land and swell the audience lis-

tening to the gorgeous ceremonial of the bearded Greek bishop, in his princely vestments.

Fedor lingered sad at heart, his eyes turning from the quaint Eskimo, in their splendid canoes, to the beautiful gorge of Indian River, and all the varied beauties of the picturesque northern harbor.—The pines on the far hills sent down their incense of peace and the air of freedom blown from American shores, now fanned the aching brow of the noble convict.

In wild medley, the rejoicing crew hastened to effect a landing.—Fedor Orlof started, as over his tea and hard bread, he heard the merry shouts: "All hands ashore for the church parade!"

"*You convicts* are *also* to be landed! It is a *legal* feast day!" growled a quartermaster.

And Pierre Lefranc's eyes dropped guiltily before his friend's glance, for *already* he was Prince Zubow's paid spy!—But Orlof's heart was only thrilling with the thought of *Olga Darine! His earthly divinity! There,* beyond the silent waters,—perchance from her *prison window,*—she now gazed at the weather beaten corvette, grimy with its Arctic struggles with the wild waves! Did her lonely heart cling *still* to her lost lover?—Fedor was as pale as marble in his guarded ecstasy of pain!

The surrounding bay brought back to the ruined gentleman, dreams of lovely Naples, with the sweep of its blue gulf, and the silver-tipped mountains hovered over him with their everlasting benediction!

Orlof thought of peerless Olga Darine as he saw her last,—her eyes shining with all the tenderness of the hapless love for which she had risked the golden years of her life!—He dared not breathe his hope of a meeting at Sitka, to Lefranc!—His good angel sealed his impetuous lips! —

The Frenchman was, however, *strangely jubilant!*—Al-

ready he felt assured of his ultimate freedom, if not of a future *fortune!*——

"Why should I now complicate myself with any desperate attempt at escape?" he mused, as the two prisoners made their hurried preparations for landing. "I may find pardon, *even reinstatement,* in the favor of these rich schemers!—Serge Zubow seems to have a subtle influence over all governmental agents.—Has he also a ring of concealed partners at the capital? Friends, these might be his in that corrupt net work ever reaching its golden webs around the Russian throne!—As for Orlof, he is only a *sentimental dreamer,* and his unbroken pride may lead him to a rebel prisoner's grave! I will *keep out of his affairs!* He is of *no use* to me *now!*—And *yet* he knows of my earlier schemes! I must keep his confidence, and trust to fortune to finally *separate us!* Zubow hates him! Orlof will not be likely to follow me in the hidden service of these daring conspirators!"

As the officers and crew manned the boats, the two convicts were roughly huddled in with the *common sailors.*—Fedor's heart beat high as they glided over the glassy waves towards the beach where the fierce Kalushes entrapped and murdered Tchirikoff's two boat's crews, in 1741.

Here, *in this bay,* French, Spanish and English explorers for two hundred years had vaguely sought for the hidden golden northern treasures! Keener eyed than greedy Spaniard, wiser than the ill-fated French, more discerning than the stolid English or the gold-seeking Russians, in eighteen hundred and ten, with an unheard of individual enterprise, the private flag of John Jacob Astor fluttered here on his trading ship "Enterprise!"—The richest American of *his generation* had only followed the lead of the richest American of *revolutionary times,* for Astor's boat only filled itself with the rich skins and priceless furs sought for in seventeen hundred and ninety-two, by Yankee Cap-

tain Gray, of Boston, Massachusetts, who piloted *General George Washington's* ship, the "*Columbia!*"—The Father of his Country had as *keen an eye* to the *commercial future* of the United States, as to the *political principles adapted* to the Republic's future in his immortal Farewell Address! —He saw the star of Empire, in his dreams, on its westward way!——

It was *here*, in Sitka sound, that the flags of England, Russia and the United States met now in the peaceful conjunction of ardent territorial extension! Peter the Great, dying in 1725, in the arms of the heroic camp follower whom he had crowned as Empress the year before, left his policy clearly mapped out, of seizing Northwestern America, as a sacred legacy to his wily wife and bold daughter! Right well and truly did Catherine I. begin the now sacred work! Following to the grave in two years, the man who had made her the greatest Empress on earth, Catherine trusted the design to their brave daughter! And when the blood stained diadem of Russia glittered on Elizabeth Petrovna's brow, she loyally fiulfilled the dying mandates of her genius crowned *father and mother!* Tchirikoff's strong hand, at her bidding, seized these mystic shores, already dominated, in thought, by dead Peter's dauntless mind!—

The reign of the Russian knout and shackles of Muscovite force, of lust and fraud, began!—The peaceful Eskimo yielded up millions as tribute paid in furs of surpassing richness, some of qualities as yet unknown to European luxury!—And that dark minister of Hell,—gunpowder,—loosened its voice here on September 26, 1745,—for on the island of Agoto, Chuprof's fierce Russians shot in wanton sport, the first unsuspecting native! Murder must reign *first* where civilization *breaks* in! Civilization's *bloody baptism!*

The Czarina's flag was a herald of untold misery!—Ac-

cursed be the hour when Tchirikoff ploughed into these peaceful Arctic waves!—Fifty years of murder and wanton arctic bloodshed rivalled even the butcheries of the relentless Spaniards in their first American forays!—It was a mere brutal delight in blood which caused Feodor Solovieff, in the name of the Czarina, to butcher *three thousand natives* with *his own hand!* Nero and Caligula's grim shades would joy at meeting the dark Russian assassin! —

Captive Orlof, as he stepped, *an abject convict*, on the strand at Sitka, shuddered as he gazed on the great winding stairs leading up to the frowning castle of three huge houses, stockaded and manned with a fierce soldiery, backed by ready artillery!

There were the *fluttering robes of women* already winding slowly down towards the great log church!—From the high double tower over the porch, the sweet bells chimed on this peaceful Sabbath morn!—The great cross shaped edifice, with its bell shaped timber dome, showed bravely its gaudy green roofs and golden summit crosses in the Autumn sunlight!—And was her beloved form nearing him?—He groaned in helpless suffering—*a prisoner!*

Here was the symbol of the *pure orthodox Byzantine faith!* Fedor Orlof, touching, first as a disgraced felon, the American strand, forced his way through a crowd of jeering soldiers, frowsy natives and idle renegades, and realized *at last* his degraded position! Fixing his eyes on vacancy, he mutely followed his guards,—keeping step in silence with Pierre Lefranc. — The prisoners marched swiftly along over the beach where heartless Solovieff caused to be bound twelve helpless Aleuts, and firing his heavily charged musket *found to his delight* that he had killed *nine human beings* at *one shot!*——

Blessed be the flag not stained with such hellish atrocities! The coming of intelligent Baranoff, in 1799, for

twenty-eight years, gave at least a uniform severity to the ferocity of the Muscovite invaders.——

Here, before he planted a settlement, bold Baranoff saw the Unalaska native uprising of 1762 *repeated!*—It was while the Governor was absent, carrying out the plans of the great Shelikoff, that Baranoff's Russian garrison was suddenly butchered by a rebellion of the wild, maddened Kalushes!—

In 1804, returning with three heavily armed vessels, the sturdy tyrant scourged the Sitkan village wtth his heavy guns, and then builded his great castle, in grim defiance, on old chief Katalan's hill! Around this natural fortification, in filth and squalor, the expiring Aleuts linger to-day, under the starry flag of our Republic, which has replaced by *purchase from a tyrant*, the emblem of Russia's insolent dominion!—Great Peter's lineal heir sold to us for paltry gold, the dominion of a land where fifty thousand butchered natives, scattered in unknown graves, add to the horrors clinging to that row of marble tombs in the Imperial Russian mausoleum on the Neva!—God's judgment *waits!*

Orlof's eyes were downcast, as past the richly dressed officials, through a line of curious strangers, the crew of the "Seevoutch" filed devoutly into the great church. Flushed with wine, his hands sparkling with gems, rich Prince Serge Zubow lazily gossiped at the door with some high officers whose breasts were covered with glittering badges of honor.

Orlof caught quickly a passing scowl as Zubow's eye met his!—His threatening hatred was soon forgotten, for Orlof heard in dismay a jeering inquiry, "Ah! Maxutoff, shall we today hear your *hidden song bird?*—Or, do you keep her for *your own* delight alone?"—

Fedor Orlof, with the second nature devotion of the high-born Russian, dropped on his knees, in the gloomy corner

assigned him!—*He was frozen with a sudden terror!* "My God! *This fiend knows the history of Olga!*"

And as he gazed on the barbaric richness of the altar and its jeweled shrines, Fedor Orlof, the outcast felt abandoned of God and man!—The mass began.—

As he prayed, in a helpless, mental panic, the deep musical voice of the Slavonic celebrant rolled out in its resonant bass. An answering choir of boy voices swelled on high in answering childish treble.

He could scarcely see the pillared dome, the great overhanging silver chandeliers, the richness of the paintings wherefrom the blessed Redeemer smiled in promise and the Holy Virgin gazed down in ineffable love!—For his eyes were clouded in piteous sorrow!

Before the jewelled altars with their opened gold bronze doors bearing images of saint and angel carved in purest silver, the priests in flushing vestments of princely richness, loudly implored the throne of Grace!—There was a hush of expectation!

The unhappy noble raised his eyes for the Governor-General's official party had now entered, and the rustle of the robes of the ladies was faintly heard upon the smooth floor of polished white cedar. The aristocrats arranged themselves in rows in the nave, which was devoid of seats, while, with a quivering heart, Orlof's eyes were lifted to scan *face after face!*—There was no mistake as to Prince Gregory Maxutoff! Pale of cheek, with a gentle wavering light of the eye, his air of dominion and reserve marking the easy going noble, still a certain vacillation clung to his handsome weak face.

By his side, earnest eyed and serious, clad in richest robes of otter and black fox, with a priceless sable collar of state, stood the Princess Beatrice Maxutoff. Her wistful face was pale and her dark womanly eyes gleamed over the serried mass of sailors, and, tender as a Murillo

Madonna, rested on Orlof's handsome face! "*Did she recognize him?*" The prisoner prayed for oblivion!—

"She knows of *my terrible past! The curse of innocent blood! The ban of shame!*" thought the sad convict, as he dropped his eyes and shunned the gentle lady's gaze.

When he timidly glanced at her again, a beautiful girl of five years was clinging to the mother's delicately gloved hand.

Fedor Orlof was in a dream as the music swelled and mingled with the chanted prayers. Around the princely Governor General of Walrussia and his stately wife, were gathered a bright and happy throng of ladies and men of evident rank. The winsome child was to be the little Princess of Alaska at the Czar's nod!—So dreamed her fond sire!—

The transition from the squalor of the corvette's steerage, and the rude surroundings of his convict cabin on the wild Amur to this rich and stately interior, brought back to Orlof the happy olden days when he breathed *the air of freedom*:—when to him clung the invisible nimbus of birth and rank!—He caught the vain glances of Lefranc gazing at the official cortege; all happy in the superstitious religious exultation of a Russian Church feast day!

For once, the prisoners were really actuated *by the same craving for freedom!*

"The poorest servant of one of the officers there seemed a king," so said once wretched Dostvieffsky, in his "Ten Years of Living Death." "Everything we could imagine in a free man,—compared with prisoners at least! *They* had *no* irons on their limbs, their head was *not* shaven, they could *go when*, and *where* they liked, with *no* brutal soldiers to menace and escort them!"—

And so, across the lane left between the *bond* and the *free*, the two disgraced officers gazed in envy at happy Prince Maxutoff's guard of honor.—

It was but for a moment that Fedor Orlof's heart sank in a wild spasm of regret for his wasted years! The ghost of an *old, lost love*,—of the fond, mad passion which *chained him still*,—warmed his heart. The beautiful brown-eyed child had caught the singular beauty of Orlof's pale manly face, and it was marble white, when the Princess again fixed her eyes upon him in surprise!

Orlof started forward, as the holy mystery of the mass proceeded,—for from behind a veiled screen,—a voice as thrillingly clear as the springing sky lark, broke on the hushed silence of the worshipers! Swelling, rising and floating in pleading melody, through the great interior, its rich accents chained the listeners with a sudden astonishment! It was Olga—the lost love of old!—

To Fedor Orlof, the silver strain *was an angel's* voice! For there, his unfaltering eyes dimmed with happy tears, he heard *again* the matchless music which had thrilled him often *in a far off world*, so long forgotten now!—*It was Olga Darine, in very truth!*—

Beneath the convict gray, the distracted lover's heart vainly struggled *to burst the very bonds of the flesh!*—

The same air of God's holy temple, now thrilling under her exquisite pleading, was breathed by *them* in peace, and *her* intoned prayer to the almighty filled his heart with a *peace beyond all words!* It was the blessed realization that *she was at last near him!* That her beloved spirit still clung to its framing casket, the graceful form he had so often clasped to his breast in truest love!—

Ah! God! To glance but once behind that cedar screen,—to see the pale proud face,—her golden hair crowning the fair young brow! To gaze into her dark Hungarian eyes, gleaming in tenderness, their liquid depths murmuring her loving heart's purest passion!"

With a quick gasp he recovered his self-control as the voice ceased! He would have fallen but for one lightning

thought! As the floating strains died upon the air, fragrant with incense, and the chorus swelled in an appeal to the Most High, broken by the resounding, deep voice of the ministering celebrant, Orlof's anxious eyes strayed anxiously to the malicious bright face of his dreaded princely enemy!—There was a knowing smile and a sneer of eager deviltry playing on Serge Zubow's brutal countenance! The Siberian palatine was whispering meaningly now to smooth Phillippi,—and over his dull face settled the tiger-like expectation of the waiting villian! The prisoner shuddered. The leer of triumph betrayed the villian's thoughts!

"I must be calm! Oh! God! *Give me wisdom now!* Guide me for *her* sake!" thought Fedor Orlof, steeling his heart to a stoic calmness, though his white lips whispered, "For my own innocent darling's sake!"—

"If I could only *meet her!* But how can I, a guarded prisoner, hope to reach her here!" He glanced at the vapid, skeptical Frenchman by his side.—"I will trust to the *God of the friendless,*—not to you,—paltry *flatterer!*—cringing *suppliant!*" he murmured in his sudden pain.—The minutes crawled slowly away, and in a grand burst of a triumphant chorus, the passion play in God's temple on these Alaskan shores, reeking with the blood of the innocent natives, was at an end! The throng of worshipers broke slowly up. A chorus of joyous salutations swelled around!—

For all not tabooed by the laws of honor, there were hearty handshakings and warm greetings, even to the lowest in station.—But while the sailors, in holiday dress and bright side-arms, remained massed in a compact body,—the officers obsequiously greeted in a throng the princely representative of the mighty Czar, Alexander II!—In his august name, Prince Maxutoff smiled and bowed, the officers paying their homage to the refinedly gentle Prin-

cess with the customary salute of a kiss upon her slender hand.—Of all the happy circle, Orlof and Lefranc alone stood *unnoticed* and *despised!* To the easy-going Frenchman it was only one more *petty humiliation!*—To Fedor Orlof it was a negation of his natural rights as *a man*,—a Russian *orthodox Christian*,—a *noble*,—and a *companion of the sword!*—

Alas! he was under the ban of crime!—As he stood irresolute the Prince's pretty child cleared with a few steps the vacant space between the prisoner and the glittering official group.—Attracted by the bright-faced, distinctive beauty of the ruined soldier, the little girl shyly said, "And won't *you too*, kiss my mamma's hand?" It was as the voice of an angel! Soon, with a gentle inclination of her head, Princess Beatrice nodded to a graceful form in black, now at her side. The child's departure was noted! All eyes were turned on *him!* The convict noble and the budding Princess of Alaska!—

Fedor Orlof's very heart stopped its beating as the light step of his *lost love*, now strangely found again, *his beloved*, approached!—Entering from the choir stalls it was only to receive the Princess' summons to reclaim the pretty truant! She neared the man who braved a Czar's wrath for her sake!

A few seconds and Olga was *at his side!* Bending over the willful fairy, Princess of Alaska, she whispered, "Irma! you must come with me!" and *then* the dreamy eyes met her lover's in one speechless glance of ravishing tenderness! It pierced Fedor Orlof's *very soul!* For the sweet spell was on him once again! It was a thrilling greeting! A true soul's recognition! A world of thankfulness for the fate that had brought them once more *face to face*, and the new pledge of a *deathless love!*—Olga turned in silence!—

A rustle of her robes and she was gone! Fedor Orlof never moved, but stood, apparently, awaiting the guard's

orders to depart! The happy worshipers filed out of the entrance, and then the smart voices of command broke the silence as the disciplined sailors marched forth to their return to the ship and their waiting feast.

As Fedor fell in behind the marching column Lefranc whispered, "*What a beauty! Did you see her?*"

"*See who?*" absently muttered Orlof, speaking as if in a dream!

Lefranc shrugged his shoulders, "*Orthodox fool,*" he muttered, "gazing at the *pictured* saints and forgetting the sight of *this dainty Eve!*"

At the door the excited lover noted, as they sighted the onward movement of the column, a whispered colloquy between Prince Maxutoff and his enemy, Serge Zubow, now leaning forward eagerly.—He addressed the Governor General.

"*That's* the fellow! The *tall* one!" sharply said the harsh-voiced Tartar.

"Ah! I'll order him *ashore* to-morrow," was the response in Prince Maxutoff's lazy, restrained voice, modulated by a refined softness.

The brightness of a new-found heaven of anticipation shone in Fedor's heart! Hope leaped up triumphant, for besides the promise of these cheering words, he had gazed for *one happy minute more* in Olga Darine's eyes, as she stood near him, the laughing child playing with her restraining hand! Though all speech was denied them, the two loving souls, intent upon each other's heart history, could safely signal in the burning glances of their meeting eyes, "*All is well!*"—

Fedor was wildly happy at heart,—for the dear one whose face had gazed so long upon his lonely dream-haunted pillow, bore still the freshness of peace and beauty on her pure brow! No sin or shame had ploughed its furrow on the buoyant brightness of her calm counten-

ance! "*Thanks be to God!*" mused Orlof. "The close companionship of the noble lady has been my poor darling's shield in her time of danger!—The little Princess has saved her! God bless the child!"—

And knowing now of the possible chance of his further detention at Sitka, Fedor was happy at heart, for the long, lonely day, as he sought his gloomy bulkhead on the ship. He had watched with a secret delight, Olga's graceful springing step, as she mounted the rocky slope toward Baranoff Castle. There was womanhood, life and love in her every attitude! He was thankful to God to have seen her dear face *thus*, once more, *even* though speech was denied them! And while he secretly joyed over Lefranc's partial ignorance, the Frenchman was slyly counselling with his new masters! Prince Zubow was this day *particularly* jubilant!—He chuckled to Phillippi: "Maxutoff is a simple goose! He is mad as a March hare about his fabled gold mines, and will now shut himself up to study the coast maps with this convict-fellow, Orlof! We are well rid of his sharp eyes! Haughty as he is, he is *no fool!* And we can *now* do as we please in the port, while Maxutoff *moons* with this convict gold hunter to be!"

Poor Orlof slept all unconscious of this stroke of an incredible good fortune——The wild winds rocked him to sleep as the corvette swung at her chains!—

Long after the wassail in the great second story banqueting hall had ceased, beautiful Olga Darine gazed from her high window on the swinging red and green lights marking the corvette's anchorage as the graceful cruiser veered idly with the tide!——

Baranoff Castle was dark and still!—Only the cry of the wild sea bird sailing by the impregnable rock, or the sentinel's hoarse call broke the impressive stillness of the night! The stockade gates were closed and locked, and in the guard house casemates, two companies of picked troops

watched the lofty eyrie where Governor Maxutoff's wife and little heiress peacefully slumbered.—

Below the cliff, in a huge three-storied warehouse, were garnered up two million dollars worth of Imperial tribute furs!—Secure in the twenty-four inch log walls, baled and bundled, were thousands of the sleek rich otter furs, the pelts of the shyest animals of the watery world! A boy at play might lift a thousand pounds' worth!——In light packets of fifty, cased in tin, were the weasel-like skins of priceless Russian sable, the coveted spoil of Khamschatka and far Kodiak!——One oblong pair of the richest black hue, whose inch deep fur of silky softness indicated fifty years of Siberian solitude, would bring a hundred golden imperials at Petersburg! A prattling child might roll away a bale worth ten thousand pounds!—An arctic treasury of spoil wrung, from the starving Aleuts !——The Czar's tribute !—

Black, blue, golden and silver fox skins,—ermine, by the *thousand*,—by *the million*,—the marten,—tons of the fossil walrus ivory, huge piles of wolf, bear and river otter, reindeer, deer, beaver skins and other peltry, whalebone by the tens of thousands of pounds and scores of thousands of salted fur seal skins, filled these great storehouses with the distant Emperor's annual tribute.——

For of the whole world, the Prybiloffs and Komandorski groups were the chosen home of the mysterious marine wonder—the "sea bears!"——Callorhinus Ursinus,—the eared seal,—a rover of the ocean, had long sought his peaceful breeding place in those *quiet* fog hidden islands!—

Over the future harvest of the floating treasure, Serge Zubow and sly Anton Phillippi merrily plotted in their cups, while lovely Olga Darine looked out alone in the clear starlit night!—Her heart clung to her convict lover in his sad solitude! The call of Love thrilled her!—The past returned with all its vanished promise!——

Under her window, the tall Muscovite officers of the Guard, with knightly chivalry, closely inspected the sentries, for at any moment, a cloud of Yankee pirate traders might swoop down on Sitka! A foreign war vessel might bring the news of a new European conflict by its hostile broadside, though the jagged rocks of Sitka Channel prevented a quick surprise of this kind!——

And even the wild Kalushes, crazed with their tribal wrongs, might creep in by the exquisite vale of Indian River and put all to the sword, and destroy the Czar's tribute with the magic touch of their *best* friend, *Fire!*—It had been easily done in Baranoff's time, when he left his unsuspecting garrison behind!

But the Crimean War and the American Civil War had waked up the easy going Russians, and Gregory Maxutoff, —though slumbering now under richest silk canopies, in the fair upper room, cedar lined,—was a keen, alert disciplinarian! His trust was an important one! "And his child *must be* the Princess of Alaska!"—So he kept his watch,—to earn this glittering dignity!

The great second floor, arranged for ceremonies,—so that one vast assembly hall could be made by the removal of its partitions,—was only tenanted now by the golden framed portraits of the land's rulers,—haughty Czars,—and beautiful Czarinas!—Here, as in every room of orthodox Russia, the icons and holy pictures had the highest place of honor in a reserved corner!——Tyranny and devotion side by side!

In a safe corner of the first floor, adjoining the great state chamber of the princely pair, laughing little Irma Maxutoff had closed her tired eyes in the happy sleep of childhood, guarded by the singer queen! It was the pretty snow bird's dainty nest!——

Ever pacing through the great halls of the castle, the warders of the night made hourly inspections, *on tip toe*,

lest the Czar's vice-gerent might wake!—As the midnight hour sounded from the distant church, where the formal summons of a state worship seemed ever pealing on the air, Olga leaned over the sleeping girl and kissed her rosy lips!—For she had now loosened her gown, and on her knees beside the prie dieu, implored the mercy of God for her unfortunate lover!

Bend as she would before the gracious Saviour and the Murillo-like Virgin, framed in gems and silver, where the fragrant altar lamp alone lit up her room, warmed by the crackling birch logs blazing on the hearth,—the loving woman saw only Fedor Orlof's eyes!—His love alone filled her longing heart!—

"God help me! *I love him too much to aid him! I must think!* My Fedor! *Poor tortured heart!*" She recalled sadly that youthful whirl of passion which turned him away from his mental balance! She *alone* in the world knew that he was only the victim of an unhappy delirium! The sacrifice of Fate! The pale, aristocratic face of the high-souled Orlof haunted her now! It was *no mean thief* who burst into the cabinet to seize by force the means to bribe *her* way out of Russia's menacing dangers!—Her lover sinned *only* to save her from an Imperial voluptuary's arms! It was *not* for murder that Fedor struck blindly, in the night, his tiger nature at last aroused!—It was to secure *his freedom* and *her own life*!—Would he not have left all his lands,—fortune,—titles,—wealth,—his high rank and even the kind favor of an Empress, to wander over the world happy alone with her!—And God had spared to this time, Olga Darine, the knowledge of aught else but some unfortunate tragedy! She knew not that fatherless Vera Orlof, weeping at Stephan's tomb, dared not think, as she dropped the wreath of Russian violets on her sire's silent breast, of the once beloved Cousin Fedor!

The unwitting killing of his kinsman! It was a *fatal chance!*

"How can I contrive to reach him! *Where* shall I see him?" cried Olga, her soft dark Magyar eyes veiled in tears.

The gentle child stirred in her sleep, and reached out to her two loving arms!—In an ecstasy of love and pleading passion, Olga threw herself on her knees by Alaska's little Princess, who was gently smiling in her sleep?

"May God give him to me again! My noble Fedor!" she whispered, "and while I have shared angel Beatrice Maxutoff's home in peace, my brave lover has been under the black prison ban of Siberia! Fedor! Fedor! *Fedor!* If these arms clasp you once again, to my bosom, we will die together! *Even Fate shall not divide us* !"

Eight bells on the "Seevoutch," found the officers busied next morning in the mysteries of "grand tenue" toilette, for the midday feast, whereat the Governor General would formally welcome his guests! On the morrow, the "Seevoutch," emerging into dainty nautical full dress from the battering of the long Arctic voyage, would be visited in state, by the official cortege, headed by the debonair Prince Maxutoff. The decks swarmed with the busy crew at work!

Before stately Commander Linieff left his cabin he sent for Fedor Orlof, now a momentary prey to every anxiety! They were alone in the cabin, while Linieff, in all the splendor of his rank, sipped his coffee, after morning reports.—

"Sit down, Orlof," he said kindly, "I have received an order to send you on shore here, under a guard, to Baranoff Castle.—*For the present*, you will be attached to Prince Maxutoff's person, as scientific clerk.—It will be far *easier* than ordinary prison life, and I hope that you will be enabled to shorten your long term by future valuable services to the Governor. Good luck to you! I wish to thank

you for the handsome set of drawings! Now, I'll send you ashore *at once*, in the dingy. Get your little things together. *Here*, this may be of some use!"—the manly sailor held out a rouleau of gold, while his bronzed face crimsoned.—Don't, *don't refuse, my poor friend!* It may help you in some sad hour of need?—I have sent a package of Petersburg papers and some other little things into the boat, for you!"

Fedor Orlof was stunned with such manly kindness, and the sudden happiness of being busied near his lost darling melted his proud heart! He brushed a tear from his eye, and brokenly said: "I thank you, commander, and I *will* take *your* gold!—God bless you!"—He stepped forward, and by an impulse, their hands met.

"I *am sorry* for you, Orlof! *God knows I am!* But Maxutoff's a good fellow! He will treat you with *some regard* to your birth and real merit! Go! *Beware of Zubow!*" he whispered.

Ah! Gallant sailor heart, it beats generously under every flag, on every sea!—The mariner stands by the helpless in frank cordiality!—

"I am to be sent on shore, Pierre," coldly said Orlof to the Frenchman, as he gathered up his few belongings. He little knew that Commander Linieff had sent a complete outfit from the ship's stores into the boat, so that only the black patch of the convict coat told next day of his past squalor. "Blessed are the merciful!" This wreath lingers on gallant Linieff's lonely grave to-day, in the God's acre at Nagasaki, where he was later stricken down by cholera's dread scourge. His admiral's flag was only lowered to King Death!—

"Oh! I will see you soon! Perhaps it *is better*, Fedor!" dissembled Lefranc. "They will keep me busy some days on board!—*Bonne chance,—camarade!*"

The easy familiarity grated on Orlof's ear.

"Fool! *Blind fool!*" muttered Lefranc, as Fedor Orlof turned a last sad glance at his floating prison, "Zubow's dark eye *follows you!* You have doomed yourself!"—and Lefranc to his morning vodki in Prince Zubow's cabin, for he was now the secret naval engineer of a *vast conspiracy!*—He had dropped Orlof from his life, for the present as a mere puppet of fate, *useless* and unnoticed!—

On through the fleet of quaint Indian canoes, each hollowed from a single giant cedar, the man-o'-war's boat sped shoreward! High-prowed, filled with rum-besotted natives, their paddles flashing in air, these painted vessels of the savages were hideously brilliant in ochres and pigments! It was a weird scene!—

Past the squalid Indian villages where the uncouthly carved totem poles towered fifty feet in the air, the ship's boat glided to the rocky strand.—Grinning figures surmounted the tall masts of family symbols, or ancestral tribe, carved into rude shapes of the bear, walrus and seal! —A death in life,—a desolation,—lay around:—for the crowded graveyard was near the crumbling Indian huts!— Rum, the dark minister of Hell, was at its unerring game of wholesale murder!—

The ivory, ostrich feathers, gold dust, furs and palm oil, the whalebone, spoils of the chase,—the untainted womanhood,—all the poor riches of the indigenes of the world,— continually groped over by *conquerors* since the fifteenth century,—have been sold for Hell's darkest brew,—the trader's rum! *Drink! Drink!*—Whether the silver-necked siren of Veuve Clîquot,—the fiery stream of Kentucky's still,—or the drugged potion of the slave trader,—the modern freebooter, or coarse frontier sutler—on this *burning tide of alcohol,*—the undying spirit of sin, of crime, of rapine and murder, has entered the soul of *reckless* man or *helpless* woman ever since the Devil found his High Priest of Hell ready at his hand!—

——"*Jump out, prisoner!*" rudely bawled the guard, as the boat's keel grated on the sand.

"Hold on, sentinel!" said a young middy. "*You* can come up with these natives and see these things delivered at the guard room! I will take this prisoner up *myself* to Prince Maxutoff and get a written receipt for him!"

"I am ready," said the young officer, quietly, as Orlof stood chafing in useless rage on the strand, and Fedor only *then* realized the exquisite courtesy of the bluff Commander! —Toiling up the great stairs, his eye roving over the witching beauty of the grand Sitka Archipelago, spread out below him, Fedor Orlof hardly dared to breathe, when his foot crossed the threshold of the castle of Baranoff! The same roof covered them now! His long lost darling waited him here!—

He stood, between two sentinels, in the guard ante-room while an Adjutant reported to Prince Maxutoff! He knew the old romantic tales of wild adventures,—of woe and wassail,—of love's tragedies and human despair, clinging to the huge stronghold mansion fort! The rattle of gold at the gaming table,—the shouts of drunken carousal,—the sighs of helpless womanhood,—and the last groans of sad captives led out from here to summary execution!—The yells of battle wild,—the proud huzzas of victory, echoed in thought through the silent rooms of the vast timber citadel!—It was at once a *palace*, a *prison*, a *fort* and *a home!* To Orlof, it was to-day a *jewel casket!* Its old stained cedars were as holy to him as those of Lebanon, for Olga Darine's darling head was shielded from the storms of winter by their sturdy shelter!——

"*Come on!*" kindly said the returning midshipman, "the Prince will see you before the guests arrive!" Orlof's heart beat high as he crossed the official wing of the huge castle and passed into the middle third,—the family stronghold.—From the grated windows, he could see the doubled

sentries pacing, heavily armed, on the long palisaded galleries.—Following his guide, he passed into a grand working room, with the windows giving an exquisite view of blue Sitka Sound with its thousand islands gemming the silent seas, dreaming there unflecked by a single sail!—The room was richly hung with banners, imperial pictures and rare trophies of the chase! Desks, tables, couches and easy chairs littered the floor. Glass cases of curiosities, huge maps and chests and rows of reserved modern weapons, (ready for use) lined the walls.——

As the young naval officer motioned to him to be seated, one of the three side doors from the interior, easily opened, and slight, aristocratic Prince Maxutoff, clad in a clinging, undulating feather weight robe of sea otter, stepped into the room.—His kindly eye rested on the lithe figure of Orlof, his clean-cut face passionless, as he stood in readiness, his uplifted hand at the soldier's salute.——

"Ah! yes! the prisoner Orlof"—the Governor General said, with a visible embarrassment, returning the salute, "Be seated! You have the papers ready, Ensign?"

He strode forward and scrawled the word "Maxutoff." That signature on the paper now gave up to him, *body and soul*, the mute prisoner!—

The young officer bowed, as the Prince, handing him the receipt for a *born Russian noble*, indicated that the audience was ended!——

"*Good-bye, Major Orlof!*" said the shy subaltern, as he extended his hand to the seated convict!—Orlof sprang to his feet, and Olga's ring cut deep into the sailor's bronzed palm.

"By Heaven, he has a manly grip, *poor fellow!*" thought the Ensign, as he hastened away to return to the "Seevoutch" and don his own gala garb.—

"I have a conference to-day here with an important Indian Chief,"—said Maxutoff, throwing himself in a chair. "Do

you speak any Eskimo dialect?"—He eyed the convict anxiously.—

"Not a word, Your Excellency, I have been busied only on the Amur," said Fedor, in reply.

"Ah! very well!"

Maxutoff closed his eyes in dreamy thought.—He was *subtle*, if weak!—

"This prisoner *cannot* spy out *my great secret!* He may be just *the very man!*"

"You know *gold mining?*"—his voice was anxious.

"I had a special two years course at the School of Mines, and four years later practical experience—*in Siberia,*" mournfully replied Orlof.

"*You* wrote the detailed report for General Dachkof of which he has sent me a copy!"

Orlof bowed in assent.

"And you can *assay?*"

"I am an expert, I may say," simply answered the convict.

"Ah!"

Maxutoff's long drawn sigh of satisfaction was not lost on Fedor, who had already learned the sad art of a prisoners study of men and official manners.

"Make yourself at home here! Wait here! You can look over these maps and charts of the coast! I may need you later this morning! I will be engaged for some time!"

He rang the bell. A soldier butler appeared.

"Ivan, see that *this person* has a good breakfast! He is to remain here! I have the reception to dispose of first.—*Is old Chief Thom at hand?*"

The soldier having answered with a bow, Prince Maxutoff then gave a few whispered directions to the watchful orderly.

"This man will provide for your present wants," said he

to Fedor. "I will need to use your skill after my reception is over!"

He retired with a quiet glance.

"That man is a gentleman of blood; *he shows it!*" said the Governor. "It is a hard, *hard* fate which brings *him* here!"——

—Orlof was in a dazed stupor, as the soldier, saluting, said:

"If the *Barin wants anything I am to provide it!*"

The Star of Hope was at its zenith!

"My man, I am only *a prisoner!*" sternly said Orlof, in some astonishment.

"Yes, but I know *you are a high Barin!*" he sturdily replied. "I am only *serf born!*"

The old soldier left the room, after pointing out a waiting ante-room, and an adjacent orderly room now empty, for the Governor General's mansion was walled off by the official castle building at each end. "*For you!*"—he bowed his exit.—The convict examined his surroundings.—

"They cannot *lose me*," bitterly thought Fedor, as from a jutting bay window he gazed along the exterior gallery. "*Three* watchful sentries at half pistol range,—and a guard station at *each corner*,—besides this Tarpeian rock!" He heard the sudden patter of childish feet, and started up as, with a merry laugh, little Irma ran into his arms, as he stooped in the curtained bay window! He had made a graceful capture!—

The merry little Princess of Alaska nestled in his arms!

There was the sound of a light foot in pursuit,—the rustle of a robe, and, peering expectantly within the recess, Fedor Orlof's burning glances rested on his beloved Olga Darine; her wistful dark eyes sparkling beneath the coronal of golden hair!—He gasped and leaned against the carved cedar post, his hand pressed on his heart in the exquisite rapture of this unspeakable moment! His darling's eyes

were fixed on his speechless tenderness! Her voice broke the silence of four years Death in Life!

"*Mouse! Your mamma wants you!*"

She caught up the child, and, at the door, allowed her to escape in frolic glee!—

As the happy fledgling Princess fled away, Olga Darine, with her slender hands clasped on her sculptured bosom, thrilled in Love's delicious pain,—with a rosy finger at her lip, whispered: "*Wait here, my beloved!*"

Fedor's quick eye glanced around the lonely room!—Before he could well scan the one sheltered angle, clasped in his strong arms, Olga Darine lay once more, her delicate face pale with the intense emotion of a tortured heart! Her arms were clinging round his neck, and heart to heart, the lovers felt their throbbing pulses beat in the unison of an unearthly delight! It was the supreme moment!—

"Fedor! *Fedor!*" she murmured, "*Never to be parted!*"

"*As God wills! Darling!*" whispered the tall soldier, when his lips met hers, in the pledge of a love victorious, even in the shadow of Death!—They listened with wildly beating hearts!

"I am to be here all day in waiting!" he whispered.—

"Beware! The soldier *may come back!*" Olga answered. "*And no one must know!*"

He thought with lightning decision of the imperilled future! *She was right!* Their very life was in peril!——

"Irma plays here *all day!* The Princess will be detained at this formal breakfast! Can *you* trust to your self-control? I will come back here then! Speak *only French!* But, wait, *wait*, my love, *for me!* I will come back the very moment they enter the reception room! The greetings, the sacouska, the feast will take time!—We will have hours to ourselves!—Remember always the child! She must *not* suspect!"

"God bless her!" he murmured, "*The little angel led you to me!*"

And on his breast, her lips clinging to his in a silent rapture, Olga saw again the prophetic scene of the night before!—The sleeping child who smiled and opened her dainty arms, while before the silent face of the Blessed Redeemer, on her knees the captive prayed for this blissful meeting to come!—A distant sound was heard.—

"For *my sake! Remember*, my beloved!" And Olga was gone!

Fedor was dazed as in a dream!—

In their future days of happiness, the parted lovers could not recall the moments fleeting by on this hazardous morning,—the furtive confidences,—the occasional visits of the soldier butler,—the stolen hour spent in unrolling the scroll of Love,—of tracing the long sad past!—

From the banquet hall, the sound of ringing laughter alone broke upon the stillness of the cabinet room!—When once or twice, Prince Maxutoff entered,—he found the tall prisoner gazing earnestly on the maps, or playing with the pretty child.

"This whole house is *her playground*, you can easily see!" said Maxutoff lightly, as he smoothed the hair of his only child.—"An excursion to Indian River valley, or a boat ride, are *all my poor Irma's pleasures!*" And the Prince turned away unsuspecting! But the charm of Love had gilded a new world with its magic touch!

Serge Zubow, a skilled social tactician, soon found a pause in the feast, wherein to speak of the wonderful music of the church service.

"Which of your ladies is the brilliant singer?" craftily said Zubow, the guest of honor, as he scanned the joyous wine-flushed faces of the beauties of the official suite. They were all strangers from the barracks in the town.

——"It was *Madame Alten*, my Swedish governess!"

coldly replied Princess Beatrice, with a quick intuition.

The persistent Prince continued, a hawk-like gleam lighting up his pitiless eyes.

"Ah! the golden-haired beauty who was with your little Irma yesterday! She does not grace your feast?"

There was a sinister inquiry in his voice.

"*Madame Alten sees no one!*" pointedly remarked Princess Beatrice. "Her devotion to *my child* has placed me under an *obligation*, but her giving up her whole time *to me*, as my *friend*, chains *her heart to mine!*"

"And this *beauty* really languishes invisible?"

There was a mocking ring in Zubow's harsh Tartar voice.

"In my society, she is certainly free from *any intrusion!*" defiantly remarked Princess Maxutoff, with a resolution which made even Zubow wince.—

"I beg pardon, Madame," he murmured, as he challenged Commander Linieff, with the toast of "The Russian Navy!"——

"The song-bird may *try her wings yet*, ma très-difficile Princess, for all *your sharpness!* we must see about a *golden cage!*"

And Serge Zubow, in silence, pledged the dark Hungarian eyes, whose witchery had roused the brooding devil in his veins!

"Of course, *she has a story!* Madame Alten,—*a Swede!* —Her eyes belie the tale! And yet, the Swedish nightingale voice! I will reach her! Gold! Bribery! Maxutoff is as weak as 'My Lady' seems sharp and eager! I will find a way! *Zubow's way!* The golden path!"——

When, flushed with the champagne excitement so dear to the Muscovite, Zubow questioned Phillippi as they reluctantly left the feast in the early afternoon, the Fur King stolidly replied, as they descended from the citadel.

"Bother the *hidden prima donna!* She is a *later play-*

thing! First, let us get Prince Maxutoff hoodwinked! *Two millions in furs!*--If we can start them for Russia,--we know where *they will land!* The Czar's silent partners!" he chuckled, "and *Maxutoff* will have to bear the brunt! *It's a royal scheme!*"

But the princely Governor General heard not! He was now at his working table, translating the old Aleut Chief's story to Orlof.——

Beautiful Olga had warned Fedor not to betray in his excited manner his sudden happiness!

"All depends on *your self-control!* My own Fedor!" she said, clinging to his breast! "I can trust to Beatrice Maxutoff, with our lives, but,--*only at the last!* Be wary, and *please the Prince!* Get a firm hold on him as his only counsellor about these fabled gold fields!--*Above all*, show no recognition of me! My heart beats now *in your bosom!* I will hover around you, and I only fear they may hear my pulses leaping in joy, as I come into your presence! Irma runs in and out over the whole mansion division of this log palace fort, and I will be always near you! *Be patient!*"—

So, Fedor Orlof bent his mind to the will of the enthusiastic Prince Maxutoff.

It was a strange scene! Before them, lying on a couch, the old Indian Chief Thom lay swathed in rich furs.--His eyes were almost sightless.--His heavy stunted frame was shrunken with age, and deep wrinkles carved channels in his low-browed mahogany-colored face. Straggling strands of coarse gray hair, once black and bushy, fell on his temples, and his knotted hands firmly clutched an idol! He was a vindictive old rebel Kalush chief, now a prisoner! The last of the old Shamans, or ruling magicians who ate of tender human flesh before the affrighted subject tribes! Well he was known and feared from Victoria to Point Barrow! In his wild youth, he had led his fleet of war canoes, with fifty savage natives in each, to the mouth of

the far distant Yukon River, silently flowing into icy Behring Sea! He had seen the gloomy Arctic ocean stretching out to the Pole, from lonely Point Barrow, and had chased the fierce brown bear on the slopes of Mount Fairweather and peerless Mount St. Elias, towering nineteen thousand feet in air! He treasured yet the golden British sovereigns given him for reaching alone Fort Selkirk and Fort Good Hope on the mystic MacKenzie River fifty years before! Sly, cruel, wise, crafty, he was more than a match for easy going Prince Maxutoff! Fedor Orlof had ample time to collect his wandering thoughts before Maxutoff gave up cross-questioning the old man-eating chief!

"*I hardly know what to do with this old wretch!*" cried Maxutoff, in French to Orlof. "I can get nothing more from him than that the gold island is *five days' voyage* paddling from here! He has given up to me some little grain gold!—He says he will have his young men get much more! But I cannot force the *location* from him.——

"What does he *fear*, mon Prince?" earnestly said Orlof.

"He wishes certain privileges from me for *his tribe*, concessions and guarantees, which I cannot give *without the Czar's approval!* I can only kill him! He will not yield! The secret would then die with him! I will be frank with you, Major Orlof," said Maxutoff, "*I need your help!*" Fedor drew his breath hard. He was madly excited. "I know of your great scientific attainments! I wish to secure a fortune for *my wife and child!* I wish to leave Irma the title of Princess of Alaska! *I can ameliorate your terrible condition!* Now, if I *officially* announce these discoveries, should we perfect them, the property belongs to the crown! If I should obtain a royal patent to these lands *for myself* the Emperor gets but a *tenth* of the treasure! I cannot honorably guarantee the old chief what he wants! *I never broke my word of honor!* But I *can* issue his tribe liberal supplies and presents! I can even give

him a store of *Russian* gold! I can treat him well! The real reason I cannot meet his demands is that this country called *Aliaska* by us will be called *Alaska* in a year or two *by new masters!* Count Fersen took the secret report home, *finally advising its sale to the Americans!* Gortschakoff and Seward have only waited for the close of the American war to conclude the cession! *Neither* power wished to defend it in a war *against England!* I will give you a room here in the house,—you shall have a desk in my cabinet. I ask of you only co-operation,—the service of a man of honor!—I will induce this crafty old red-man to get me rocks and soil from the location of the gold! I will flatter him! He offers to have a council of his tribe and to do all that I wish! We *may* thus be able to deduce the location!—

"You are a *geologist* and *savant!* I may send *you* out with his natives! Now, all this, if I turn the country over so as to meet the Emperor's approval, may tend to your final *pardon* and *rehabilitation!* All now depends on your *keeping faith* and promising *not to try to escape!* I will treat you as *one of my staff!* Do you promise?"

"*I swear it by my mother's grave!*"

"Then, Major Orlof," said Maxutoff, gleefully, "I will dismiss old Thom for to-day! But I keep him *near me!* He was the head chief of Al-ak-Shak (the great land),—of its half million square miles and its three thousand islands! —He has seen sixty-five volcanoes blazing at once here, and his father fought Captain Cook! He is to-day the uncrowned king of the fifty thousand wild savages! He worships the mystic god of the fifty miles of glacier, and communes with the spirits of the boiling and medicated springs at Gorelei! There, enthroned by the vast eighteen-mile round, boiling cauldron, he has eaten the tribute flesh of a maiden from every tribe! *We must outwit him!* His power is wonderful! I have seen him with five thousand Indians around him, address the inswarming fish of the

sea! Not a spear or net was lifted till the dread old Shaman gave *his august permission! Through him* we can gain all! He guards yet the skulls of sailors killed from the first American ship 'Atahualpa,' from Boston, coming here in 1802! I have vainly tried to gather ghastly relics from him! He is as *wise* as he has been disgustingly licentious and ferocious, and his subjects are the same! *We live in constant fear!*—That is why I keep my *wife*, my *child* and *Madame Alten*, our governess, locked safely here from these diseased, filthy, polygamous idolators! I trust *only* to my guards and *our ready artillery!* Now, Major, the 'Seevoutch' will soon sail! I shall treat you with reserve while the visitors are here! *After that*, you can be made a member of the family!" The Governor rang his bell. "Let the Captain of the Guard send for some soldiers to bear the old chief out!" cried Maxutoff, "and pray ask *Madame Alten* to favor me with her presence!"—As he spoke, and the orderly hastened away, a signal gun from the outer island battery boomed.—

"*A ship arriving!*" said Maxutoff, in answer to Orlof's glance of inquiry. "In five minutes, I shall have her name and description, by semaphore! *It saves us going down hill!*" said Maxutoff laughing.

Orlof sprang to his feet and stiffened into the soldier's attitude, as Olga Darine noiselessly entered from Madame Maxutoff's boudoir. "*Your Highness!*" she said, softly, with downcast eyes.—The lover's eyes silently met!

"Madame Alten, this is my new secretary, *Major Orlof*, of whom we spoke! I wish *you to know him* as he will be of my working force this winter! Pray, have the orderly room fitted up for his use! *For the present*, his meals will be served there! We will see *later* what we can do!"——

In all the ordeals of Fedor Orlof's sad career, no task was equal to the self-restraint of calmly answering the dark-

eyed beauty, whose trembling lips murmured: *"I am happy to know Major Orlof!"*——

The voice, sweet as the wind sighing through the summer forest, unmanned him! He respectfully kissed the lady's hand, in silence! His lips were *burning as with fire*, and her delicate hand *was cold as ice!*——

A Lieutenant of the Guard entering broke the tension of the anxious moment. "The American whaler, 'Reindeer,' for supplies and repairs!"

"Tell the Port Captain that I wish to see him! Ah! Madame Alten, *you*, can show Major Orlof his room, and bid the servants unpack the bundles! By the way, Major, anything you wish, my butler will supply from the public stores!—*I will ring when I wish you!*"—

Olga's happy eyes had read the secret of their good fortune, and standing, heart beating to heart, in the silence of the little orderly room, it seemed as if the re-united lovers were *entered into Paradise!*—

"Only a *little self-control* till the corvette sails, and then Princess Beatrice shall *know all!* We can trust to *her* noble heart!" whispered the happy beauty.—

Fedor Orlof was glad to have a quiet hour of self-commune. He slept the sweetest sleep of his life, dreaming now only of a *golden* future!—

Prince Maxutoff, in a half hour's evening chat, sketched out his future plans, and said: "With the two million dollars' worth of furs which I have collected,—turning the last season's tribute into the same values,—I can send the Emperor an *enormous final present* to add to the seven or eight millions in gold the Yankees gave! And, my administration honored, my career closed, if *we can discover these mines*, my good Beatrice shall be the queen of a future home, and Irma, *little Irma*, the richest girl in Russia! We must succeed!"—

A week glided by in a happiness which seemed unearthly

to Fedor Orlof, who had been now presented by Madame Orlof to the gracious Princess Maxutoff.

"When the corvette sails, Major, we are to be a family *winter club!* So I shall ask you to brighten our table, for my Irma has truly found a *new playmate!*"

Handsome Orlof, now in all externals the man of rank, *save the gray coat,* dared not to lift his honest eyes to the Murillo-faced Russian mother! He knew but *too* well that *his* own darling, as well as *her* darling, had effected the magical change!—Love's magic touch gilded his prison life!—

It was on the eve of the gunboat's departure when Prince Maxutoff said: "I must send you on board the corvette, Orlof, of course *under a guard,* to examine the ship's maps! It is really necessary that they should publicly observe your status! Alas! There are too many prying eyes and busy spies ready ever in Russia! You may see Lefranc there, your late companion! *Be prudent!* You will be only kept on board an hour!"—

As Orlof was taken in a shore boat to the war ship's side, he noted Prince Serge Zubow, Anton Phillippi and Lefranc returning in a naval boat, with several Indian chiefs and a robust-looking American mariner. Lifting his eyes in surprise, he noted the heavy-sparred Yankee whaler lying two cable lengths away, and at her side eight beautiful double-ended whale boats, slung in the davits. They were fit to ride on the curling foam of a breaker, and yet elastic enough to stand the howling gales of the Ochotsk Sea! Housed all over, with furnaces built on deck, and swarming with men, the whaler looked like an Arctic pirate flag ship,—her *really merited* designation! After a half hour's examination of the maps, Orlof bade Commander Linieff a respectful adieu!

"You find Maxutoff *a fine fellow,* don't you?" began hearty Linieff.

He stopped,—for with a scowling, evil eye, Prince Serge Zubow was gazing through the open door.

"Go! God bless you! Go quickly,—*for your own sake!*" cried the frank sailor.——

Fedor Orlof, unsuspecting and happy at heart, sought Pierre Lefranc's bulkhead.

"Ah! I have heard of *your good fortune!*"——sneered Lefranc, "*I* am to sail with the gunboat and be left at Kodiak! *But McMann is here!* My turn will come! That was the mate whom you saw in our boat!"

Orlof asked:

"Where had you been?"

"Oh! Zubow has bought an American bark now at Victoria,—a relief whaler. McMann is going down to bring her up, and I am to build them a brig also at Kodiak! Maxutoff fears Prince Zubow, and has made my serving him all right!—When that brig leaves Aliaska, *I go with her!*" joyously cried Lefranc.

"*And Zubow?*" anxiously inquired Orlof.

"He will winter at Kodiak! He goes down now to Victoria to outfit his new boat? The 'Reindeer' will put them in a homeward-bound whaler and stand off and on the coast till they return. By the way, I must *go to him* now! Adieu! Camarade! Look out for that *pretty unknown of Maxutoff's!* Zubow *has his eye on her*, and he *is a devil of a fellow!*"

"Where were *you* on shore?" sharply said Orlof, holding out his hand in a formal good-bye.

"Oh! *With the old Shaman!* Zubow and he are fellow scoundrels! They have had friendly fur dealings for five years. We got to-day some rare bargains!"

"How about the *gold trade?*" said Orlof, as he paused carelessly at the door.

"It will *wait till next year;* if old Shaman Thom is liberated, I may then find out the secret! He alone knows!

Well! *It is adieu!*" coldly remarked Lefranc, as he vanished.

"I am glad I did not *tell him all!*" said Orlof, with vague distrust. But the warning as to Zubow's penchant for the hidden singer chilled his heart!—

The next day when the Seevoutch was a mere blur of distant smoke on the horizon, Orlof loyally told Prince Maxutoff all!

"*Ah! this is dangerous!*" said he, repressing his feelings! "I will watch Prince Zubow, for he has tried to force his way into my family circle! *I, too, distrust the man!* The 'Reindeer' sails to-morrow! Then, we are safe! Our studies can begin,—and I can ask you *to my table!* I must acknowledge Prince Serge Zubow's rank openly, but I fear him! My home is my own!"

While Orlof watched alone for signs of the 'Reindeer' being gotten under way, haughty Serge Zubow, invincible in his millions, drank in Madame Alten's beauty! He was a forced guest often at the castle! The social meeting could not be avoided! Her brief, cold replies could not efface the thrilling gleam of her sloe-black Hungarian eyes! Unsuspecting Prince Maxutoff saw nothing!

"I will get this weakling Governor *in my power!* I will rob him of that *golden-haired wonder!* An angel's voice, a Hebe figure, the face of a Greuze beauty, and,—*a history!* I will force Prince Maxutoff to give *her up to me!*"

Serge Zubow laughed coarsely, as he lit a Trabuco, while sauntering down the deep ascent.

"They sail on the morning tide, Major!" cheerfully remarked the Prince as he bade the now relieved watcher good night!

"I will now organize a survey of all the Islands between here and Holy Cross Sound! It will enable you to examine the country this fall and early next summer. The hidden key of this secret is held only by the wily old head

Shaman Thom! He shall *never* leave the range of Baranoff Castle's guns! I will have my patrols watch the haunts of his insolent tribes! We must, with your scientific knowledge, baffle them and find the fields of gold! *I* will be *then* rewarded for my ten lonely years in the Arctic! A self expiation! *You* will be yet rehabilitated, and you may be a new Monte Cristo! Let us then work together! Now, I can give you the privileges of a gentleman! *The spies are gone!*"

Gentle Beatrice Maxutoff, sitting at her child's bedside, was astonished when Olga Darine leaned her fair head in her protectress' hands and told her of Zubow's advances! There were choking tears in her voice, as she cried:

"Save me from that dreadful *Tartar ruffian! You saw his glances!*"

Throwing her arms around her, the loving Princess cried: "Olga! put your trust in me! *Your life shall be as pure as my own!*"

CHAPTER V.

PRINCE MAXUTOFF'S PLAN—THE FUR KING'S PLOT—OLGA'S PRINCELY LOVER—"I MUST BE A CONVICT'S BRIDE!"—HAND AND HEART!—THE SILENT PARTNER—"THE ISLAND IS MINE!"

The three happiest weeks of Fedor Orlof's life ran away in golden moments of recurring ecstasy! Prince Maxutoff soon recognized his quick administrative ability, and sweet Beatrice, the Lady of Baranoff Castle, lived a new social life in the hours when the cultured noble sat with *Madame Alten* in the Princess' boudoir!—Little Irma was already devoted to the gentle-mannered guardsman. In the social circle the clouded past was never touched on, but Olga Darine's thrilling eyes kindled as Fedor spoke often to *her* heart alone in veiled tenderness!—Gregory Maxutoff's quiet remark, "I like my secretary always to appear *in black!* I despise uniform!" was a graciously hidden permission to drop *the convict coat!*

"Keep your '*government property*' at hand, should a foreign or home war vessel drift in!" gently said Maxutoff. Fedor Orlof folded it away with grateful tears in his brave blue eyes, for it spoke of General Dachkof's generous sympathy! He knew now, that the General had sent a confidential letter recommending him to Prince Maxutoff!—And the quiet morning walks on the great gallery of the rock fort with Olga told him all! She was now blooming in a strange beauty which startled even the calm Maxutoff! The unrestrained confidence of the time soothed her! The perfect freedom of their days was a boon of Heaven when they were alone!

Prince Maxutoff, fond of the chase, often went far afield or sought the upper reaches of lovely Indian River! Days came when the princely pair and their laughing heiress, the future Princess of Sitka, would go to the distant wooded islands to give the little girl a boat ride and a run! *Then*, Olga and Fedor, in their solitude, played at Prince and Princess!

"I am happier than *I dared ever dream!*" he would say, as her head lay on his breast The world's strange, hard way had joined their lives forever!

"You *cannot leave the castle*, only *that mark of bondage* is left!" she would often murmur.—

"I have the whole world with me *when you are by my side! Here* is my kingdom,—*in your loving heart!*" he would answer!—

Preparations for the secret voyage kept Maxutoff busied with the old Chief and in the labor of fitting out an old relief schooner.—Orlof's hidden hand directed all, for he was *now the mainstay* of the Prince! Study and deduction had closed in the region of search as lying between Sitka, Mount Fairweather, the Tako River and Fort Wrangell.—

"I wish to get you away before *Prince Serge Zubow's return!*" said the Governor. "He is too *high in rank* for me to openly send him out of my jurisdiction! Yet I distrust and fear him!—I am told by a secret agent that he was closeted for days with Count Fersen at the Khamschatkan capital! They are cool plotters and capable of any scheme!"

Poor Maxutoff forgot the two millions of his hoarded fur tribute, the proof of his official integrity! Safe *now*, but later?—

They were now walking on the gallery, gazing on the magnificent scene of Sitka Bay outspread before them.

"What Zubow wants more ships for, I cannot see! He has no business to be roving over *Behring Sea, whatever hold* he may have on the northern Siberian *shore!*"

Alas! Alas! Easy-going Maxutoff did not know that cunning Serge Zubow had learned from Count Fersen of the imminent transfer of Aliaska! That corrupt Count Fersen, sly Phillippi and greedy Zubow already dreamed of controlling the vast fur-seal herds of the Komandorski and Robben Islands, and that Phillippi was to watch the cunning Yankees who would soon grasp at the millions of dollars in glossy pelts swarming on the Prybiloffs! But his brow was unclouded, as he watched sweet Madame Alten at the angle of the walk with Irma at her side.

"*Do you not find her beautiful?*" suddenly said the Governor.

"She is a *wonderful woman!*" huskily said Orlof, a red spot leaping, in tell-tale crimson, to his pale cheek. He did not know that the magic touch of Love had made him as a young Greek God, a northern Apollo, for he only saw that Olga, his beloved, was fair as Aphrodite of the sea foam! To-day she was exultingly radiant in her glowing beauty!

"*Strange that I have never fathomed her past history,*" mused Maxutoff, forgetting Orlof, whose heart was beating wildly.

"Is she,—*is Madame Alten—under restraint?*" slowly faltered Orlof.

"She,—that graceful woman,—*is a mysterious prisoner!*" replied the Governor. "When we outfitted at Sevastopol, on my return four years ago, my wife was authorized to select four suitable attendants, for our residence here, from the convicts waiting transportation to Saghalin!"

"By some mystery of woman freemasonry, the Commanding General's wife knew of Madame Alten, who was kept there in solitary confinement by a Privy Council order!"

With strange and superstitious reverence, the name of the Czar never crossed Maxutoff's lips in his converse with Orlof.

"At any rate, at my wife's request, I applied *for her!* A secret report was made in the case! She was given over to me as a *personal trust* of the Privy Council, 'for detention as *a prisoner of state!*' It was with no *charges* or definite *sentence*, but she was to be kept detained *under my own eye*, subject only to the orders of the Imperial Cabinet Secretary! The confidential statement was made to me that she was not an *objectionable* person,—and that my *sole duty* was to prevent her escape, and to absolutely cut off *any intercourse with strangers!* My wife has learned to *love her!* Our child *adores her!* Without her, our lonely Arctic life here would have been colorless. As nurse, friend, companion, sister, and woman, my wife has grown to lean on her!—And, *strangest of all*, I have never fathomed her past! The continental languages she speaks with equal fluency,—she is cosmopolitan in belles-lettres,—and the purity of her character is as chaste as the opening rose! I have thought at times, that my wife *knew more than I!* Yet emotion, womanly tears in this sweet nature, I have *never seen!* I can fancy her though, in superb dress, covered with jewels, that wild, exquisite voice ringing out, a queen of song! What has been her past?"

He mused in silence, gazing at Olga's distant fluttering robes.—

"Why Orlof, she would *grace a palace!*—But, we must now *take up our work!*" And it was only that night, in

the gloaming, as she lay in his arms, that Olga Darine told her beloved, how faithfully Beatrice Maxutoff had guarded the secret of years!

Fedor thanked God for this dream of love, too sweet to last!——

He was buoyant and hopeful! For the social amenities of the gentleman eased his daily life! He had missed them in his prison life *more* than even his lost fortunes! True, he had *never worn irons*, his intellectual labors had absolutely prevented that, but he had been roughly *herded with human brutes!* Four years of his youth had been passed in a dark eclipse!—It was as if he looked back now at *another* being,—a pale, hopeless *shade*, a wandering *ghost!* Even in these four weeks, he had burned his light until the small hours, devouring books, reviews, reports, old journals and the American files of journals sent up by the Russian Consul or traders, as well as the Journal de Petersburg!—He was thus born again into a new life, and baptized in the holy chrism of Olga Darine's kisses!

"There is *nothing left*, but to *die together*, my own, *my beloved!*" she whispered, "I am yours *before God and men!* We have the prisoner's right of *hiding our joys*, as well as *drinking the bitter cup of our sorrows!*"

Orlof forgot now his four long years spent in joyless prison walls! His step became elastic, his eye flashed with a new fire, for Olga's love thrilled every fibre of his being!—He was gathering in the arrears due him by untoward fate!

Five weeks from the day when Zubow sailed away on the "Reindeer," the stout dispatch schooner "Baranoff" lay ready under the guns of the castle. *By day*, Maxutoff and his secretary toiled;—*at night*, while the Prince varied his routine life with visits to his superior

officers, garrisoning the other wing, Fedor Orlof was the faithful knight of two gracious women who loved *each other,* and one of whom, adored *him* in secret!——

The battalion of troops guarding the coast, were officered by sturdy, fighting line officers, who aspired not to cross the threshold of the domain where Beatrice Maxutoff reigned, a beloved queen! The old Bishop, with his clergy, crooning over cards and wine, enjoyed their feasting in the snug house of the ecclesiastics below, adjoining the great church! They had their own retinue,—their guards, — and their easy luxury was quietly winked at!—It was only on 'great days' that the Castle descended to the Church,—for a chaplain said a daily prayer in the official chapel on the rock! The one element of present danger was the sudden arrival of some one of the Czar's representatives of rank, or from the gay officers of the war ships, superior in culture to the army representatives! But, with gentle dignity, beyond a few public appearances, when the great Hall was decked for a ceremonial, the Lady of Sitka was only a graceful hidden charm to the dependents of her princely husband! So it was,—that on the eve of his departure,—Fedor Orlof's heart was comforted when the Princess whispered kindly,

"*I will guard your Olga!* She shares *my very life!* She shall be sheltered *in my rank!*—against *all intrusion,*—and when she leaves Sitka, *she goes with me, as my* sister! *If I should die,*—and the beautiful mother's voice faltered:

"Olga! you alone would have the duty of keeping my memory green in Irma's childish heart! Gregory has pledged this on his unbroken word!"

And there were happy tears of reverence in Orlof's eyes, as he bent in gratitude over Beatrice Maxutoff's

slender hand. At sundown on the next day, the "Baranoff" towed by a tug, was ordered to leave the sound. —A nominal commander had received the Governor's orders, but Orlof was the real master of all but his own personal liberty!

"I think that my plan is good!" said the anxious Prince, as they sat alone in the last conference at the library table on the sunny morning of the departure.—

"You have yet a month of fine weather, and my parties of fur hunters, secret spies and government agents will be dropped off in pairs to winter with the natives of all the shore villages of the sly, old Shaman Thom! They will soon find out the sources of the gold supply, in a general way! During the long winter, the suspicions of the blubber eating natives will relax!—I have even furnished my men extra rum to wherewith loosen their lips! Rum unlocks *every tongue* from the palace to the hut!" cynically said the Prince.

"Drink is the national vice of our *lower orders,*—the stain on many of our *bravest and best!*" Maxutoff sighed. He was himself a man of refined and measured tastes!

"You have with you plenty of trading goods! Use them liberally!—Now, as you sail with several canoes in tow, with a couple of native crews, and your general orders for any assistance to my scattered sub-stations, you can carry on both a connected island examination and shore reconnoissance!—You have my delegated power to use funds and trading goods to obtain samples of rock, gravel, earth, and varied test materials and send them to me here! Keep your own counsel! All depends on your wisdom! I have given you a brave, faithful, competent sailor, a hardy Lieutenant who has worked his way up! He will not even *dream* of the object of your search! Major Orlof, we *must* succeed! Keep an

argus eye on all around you!—The secret treaty of cession will surely be closed next year! Sixty-six will see the signature, and Fersen told me that the summer of '67 would see me relieved of my trust by the Americans!—I must get this land title to the gold regions registered and approved *next year*,—then, if you have found the exact location of the mine, *our* fortunes are safe,—*your* pardon assured!—All I will have to do, is to send the two fur cargoes safely home!—They are a million dollars, each, in gold value!—I will then settle the accounts of the Russian Fur Company, going back to 1799,—dismantle the posts, and the Admiral of the Pacific Fleet will finally transport my garrison home or over to the Amur!—My last official act will be to haul down the Imperial flag on Baranoff Castle!"—

"What becomes of the poor native people?" said Orlof, with a real concern.

"Ah! Rum and disease will soon settle that problem!" sadly answered Maxutoff.—"They go with great *Aliaska!*,—soon to be *Alaska* under the Stars and Stripes! Alas! *They are doomed!*"——

"And your *Russian* subjects?" said the convict noble.

"They can elect to become Americans, or will if they prefer, be sent with all their property, home to Russia! Fixtures will be paid for from Government funds,—movables sent home free! All the officers and higher officials will be then retired and double pensioned for life!"——

"*And yourself?*" said Orlof, with a quick intuition of the grave change in Olga Darine's future,—whom the Prince only knew as the lovely "*Madame Alten!*"——

"As for *me,—the will of God and the Czar's pleasure!*" said the Governor, devoutly crossing himself. "*Now to business!*" said he briskly, "I am convinced that the

cabinets of Europe have had a secret knowledge for many years of the existence of great gold deposits, somewhere near the southeastern bend of Aliaska! Look at this record of their careful shore examinations. Tchirikoff and Delisle de la Croyere, in 1741,—Ayalu and Quadra, in 1775,—Captain Cook, in 1778,—La Perouse, in 1785,—Commodore Billings, in 1785-94,—Liziansky, in 1805,—Von Koltzebue, in 1817,—Admiral Beechey, in 1826-27,—Wassielleff, in 1832,—Admiral Kellett, in 1846,—Admiral Collinson, in 1850,—and now, in 1865, this bold Yankee, Colonel Bulkley, also *pretends* to be pushing a *telegraph line* around by Behring Straits to Russia!—What hardihood!"—

"They *may not* be searching for gold, after all, these Americans,—for the wild dream of an ocean cable to Europe *will never be realized!*—Here are *five* Russian, *four* English, *one* French, *one* Spaniard and *one* American search parties! What was their *real object?* Furs? No! They did not even disturb the animals! *We* have easily gleaned fifty million dollars in furs, unmolested, since the days of Alexieff, Tchirikoff, Bassoff, Shelikoff and Golodoff, as well as the fiend Solovief! No one has *ever* yet disputed our fur trade! Was it the moving treasure of the *whales?* No! For it was only in 1848, *less than twenty years ago,* the 'Superior' was driven into the Arctic Ocean by her fearless Yankee captain!"

His voice sank into a whisper. "No! Orlof, it was *gold, gold alone!*"——

"Old Shaman Thom tells me that his famous father handed down the secret of the mine *to him,*—and that the old chief said the white men in the 'big canoes' all sought only for *gold!* He says it has ever been so in *his* own time,—up to the sunset of his life, and his old age! —*Now, Orlof!*—Some one once *did* know, but the secret

has been lost!—The charm is no longer potent! *Some one* has made promises to the Indians which have been *broken!* The wily natives have then concealed in revenge the location of the beds where nature's treasures peep through the meshes of the worn earth! *Find me but the region!* I will get an Imperial patent to cover a *palatinate* in extent! *Then we are safe!* I fear the impending change of rulers and my sudden recall!

"*Look at California!* Dreamy and idle, it lay two centuries under Mexican rule! Only the *wily churchmen* knew of the golden river sands! They *smothered the discovery* for two generations, hoping that His Most Catholic Majesty of Spain would regain Alta California! But the revolt of Hidalgo ended all! By accident, an humble American mechanic, toiling as a workman for a Swiss Refugee farmer,—found the precious yellow harvest! *The whole world* then rushed in and freely helped itself! In ten years a giant state sovereignty sprang into life,—San Francisco has grown to be a princely city *in less than twenty years!*" What built up its homes of luxury on its many hills?—*Gold,—only yellow gold!* Now, in the Fraser River, in British Columbia, our British enemies have also found gold *in abundance! It is here too!* It was known to exist before a single grain was gathered in California or Vancouver! *You* must unlock the secret of these rocky caves,—the mystery of the lonely hills! *I* battle for my wife and child's fortune,—*you* for life and liberty!"—

Maxutoff ceased, his enthusiasm had carried him away! "My wife wishes to show you some last courtesies! I have no doubt you would also wish to say adieu to *Madame Alten*, as well as your *little playmate*, my Irma! I will go on board with you at sundown! The old Chief Thom is already embarked,—and he has

my secret orders in view of *every possible reward* to bring you near to the El Dorado we seek! Remember! We fight for *my* fortune, *your* life and liberty!"——

"*And for love!*" added Fedor Orlof, silently in his heart of hearts, as he grasped his princely patron's hand and vowed his best efforts to the cause! Not a disturbing shade was on his mind, for was not brutal Zubow now, *a thousand miles away?* And, in his absence, the spirited and delicately brave Princess, Olga's sister of the heart, was ready to guard the beloved woman, whose arms were now stretched toward him, in waiting for the parting!

They gathered around the board for the farewell breakfast! It was only after an hour's bright social happiness that the Princess claimed the escort of her husband!

"It is a delightful day!" she said, "If you only go on board at nightfall, let us take the chariot and drive to Indian Point!—*Irma* needs her usual excursion, and *I* wish to exchange a few greetings with the Bishop, Madame Alten! I will leave *you* to tell Major Orlof of our excursion to Kodiak last year! He will soon coast along the same romantic shores!"——

When the lovers were alone, they blessed the gentle strategy of the noble-hearted Russian Princess! She wished to throw the mantle of perfect security around the hopeless lovers in their farewell!—

For Gregory Maxutoff dreamed of gold alone, only of the coveted treasures withheld by the resentful Indians, and, *yet* a man of the world, he might have read the lesson of heaving bosom, of moistened eye, or broken voice! As yet, the Prince Governor General, who had been years absent in Central Asia, during Olga Darine's bright career, never dreamed that the vanished darling

of the Petersburg opera, was his wife's strange confidant! He recked not of the unhappy love which, in maddening a Czarevitch, in passion's whirl,—had led the imprisoned pair under the convict ban!—

Hand clasped in hand, in love's sweet dream, or with the golden head on his bosom, the hours fled all too swiftly, while Fedor Orlof felt his darling's heart beat against his own!—A day of days!——

It was a happiness which passed all human hope,—all earthly seeming! The flowing together of two souls in the consecration of a love for this life and beyond the grave! There was no shadow of parting on their happy hearts, for the pine-clad shores, the snowy summits, the lonely glaciers,—and the still island gemmed inlets hid them, mantled with the friendly blue sea waves, from the unforgiving code of human laws and the trammels of a magnificent tyrant!——The distance of their exile was their safeguard!—

They lived *in love*,— for *love alone*, *forgetting* a once familiar world which had *forgotten them!*——

—When the sun sank to the west, Fedor Orlof left the castle of Baranoff in his gray prison coat, with the black convict patch! True, it was concealed by a fur great-coat, for the sea breeze was chill; but a brace of armed sentinels marched at his side, and also an orderly officer.

His *heart* was *free*,—but he was still the Czar's *bondman of shame!* He suffered not, as he threaded the mongrel village crowd, for Maxutoff had whispered, as he pressed his hand before leaving the mansion, "I only make this public parade of your condition, for I know the Bishop and his lazy clergy can easily make *secret reports* on me to the great Metropolitan of Russia! And *that great dignitary*, the working head of the Greek Church, is the *only man in the world* before whom

the wearer of Russia's imperial diadem trembles! Besides,—Orlof, I know not what other spy, Count Fersen has left here!—I fear also that beetle-browed Tartar, Prince Zubow!—His smug friend, Anton Phillippi, too, is as much *at home* in *Washington*, as in *London*,—in *Paris*, as at *Yokohama*,—in *Berlin* or *Vienna*, as at *St. Petersburg!* He has the invincible capital of *the Rothschilds* behind him!"——

"Why," said Orlof, who, though used to Russian dissimulation, was *startled!* "Because they already have their eyes on the fur trade of the world! A great high junta of Israelite capitalists, dominate the Bourses of the whole world! Your cool, educated, patient, passionless Hebrew, avoiding racking toil, shunning the burdens of citizenship, *trading*, not *manufacturing*,—*loaning*, not *risking*, is the high priest of the world's reigning deity, —*Gold!*—Slaves to tyrants, victors in the mart!"

Orlof was tranquil at heart, for his adieu to the queen of his heart had been carefully shielded by graceful Beatrice Maxutoff.—She had led her pretty child away, while '*Madame Alten*' was, all in all, her *real* self,—*the loving Olga Darine!*

In the boudoir of the Princess,—Orlof gazed into the wonderful eyes for the last time, and strained the loving woman to his heart! "*Go now, my beloved,—while I am yet brave!* You bear my heart in your bosom!"

With a wonderful intuition, she kissed his lips in an adieu which silenced his protest, and resolutely took her place at the window, with the merry Princess of Alaska at her side, to see his white sails lost behind the islands dimpling the beautiful bay! The "Baranoff" bravely faced the rolling seas!——

There was no formal adieu when Prince Maxutoff bade the powerful tug move the schooner out! But, he called

up the noble convict, before the lines were cast off at the entrance of the channel, and, in a few last words, told Fedor of the absolute confidence of his secret partner. Orlof saw the Prince transferred at last, to the tug, and his eye rested fondly on the distant gallery where a gleaming white signal shone like silver, in the afternoon sun!——

It was Olga's adieu,—the last message of love!—Fedor lost the token from view at last, as the stout schooner stood out, over the dashing crisp surge to the mystic haunts of the Kalushes!—Free now in every respect, he thought of his four horrible Siberian years, of the prisoners flogged to death, closing their eyes in the mad ecstasy of pain, of the "green lane" of the regimental running the gauntlet, where the fresh cut sticks beat down the dying victim,—of the cold, starvation and horrid silence of the salt mines,—where squads of groaning wretches toiled in chains,—of the days when, in hospital, he had seen the irons struck off the senseless clay, and he *realized* the blessings of the fate now his own!—The bliss of the re-union thrilled him, and he knew in Baranoff Castle that his promised Olga was safe! But as he blessed her gentle protectress in his heart,—and swore to be true to Maxutoff's quest,—his eye fell again on his glittering turquoise ring! He shuddered, as he left the deck,—for it was *that hand* which made innocent Vera Orlof an orphan!—It was an ominous presage!——

"I pray God in His Infinite Mercy that the curse of this innocent blood may not *follow me!* Vera! *My orphaned cousin!* If I could bring back your noble father, I would even bow my head to the stroke!" For the fatherless girl's face rose before him, as the gray fog whirled and drifted down upon them, and the night

winds seemed to breath an ominous burden, "*Vengeance is mine!*" saith the Lord, "*I will repay!*"——

—The burden of Love lay heavily upon Olga Darine for the long month before the first tidings of the Baranoff's cruise reached the village of Sitka! The snows were now creeping downward on Mount Edgecumbe, and the garrison was busied in preparing for the long winter.——

Huge mountains of wood gathered on the rocky plateau,—the barricading of the great storehouses and the erection of moss-stuffed huts for the sentries told of the long winter's advent.——

The last American whaler had touched and flitted southward for the year, and a passing Russian cruiser, joining the San Francisco squadron, brought the year's final dispatches for Prince Maxutoff.—

In the little family circle, he had noted the pale cheeks of the woman he only knew as Madame Alten!—

"Beatrice!" he said with alarm, "can it be that our friend is failing, under the fogs and depression of this gloomy station! To think that *you* might be left here alone, deprived of womanly cheer and aid, that *our child* may lose her gentle governess, would tempt me to *send her south*, even if I *answered to the Czar*, for the deed! I am not willing to *see her sacrificed!*"——

—"You forget, Gregory, that *we* have our *child*, our *love*, our *future*,—that *we* are sustained by hope, and that the current of our lives has mingled in a union *which sustains!* I am hopeful that my heart has fathomed the secret! It is only the *blank loneliness* of her life, the *mental torture* of her termless captivity, the fretting of a *proud soul* born for freedom!"—

And while Prince Maxutoff showered every mark of kind consideration on his beautiful prisoner,—the Prin-

cess *alone* knew that the smiles now fled, would return, *with the roses on her pale cheeks*, only when *Fedor Orlof's mission was at an end!*—

The arrival of a great canoe, manned by twenty natives, and flying the Russian naval flag, caused Prince Maxutoff to bound from his chair in excitement, when the officer of the guard reported the strange occurrence a week later:

"*News! News!*" he cried, rushing to his wife's boudoir. "*In an hour*, we will know of the Baranoff's movements, for I ordered this dispatch canoe to be sent coasting homeward! But the incoming ship, I can not *make her out!*"—

"What foreign vessel comes here *so late!* And a sailing merchantman, *bearing the Russian flag*, is also outside! It is most unusual!"—

An hour later, a sturdy Russian sailor delivered into the Prince's own hand a sealed dispatch. In Princess Beatrice's room, her hands clasped on her bosom, Madame Alten paced the floor in wild unrest, while the Governor General tore open the envelope and eagerly questioned the sailor.—The Prince's face was beaming when he strode in from the library! He whispered a few words to his wife and then turned to the pale-faced governess, who was busied with Irma's merry pranks!

"The 'Baranoff' will return *in a fortnight*, and the exploration for the season *is over!* Major Orlof will soon make up our fourth hand at whist!"——

At a sign from his watchful wife, Maxutoff left the room, for Olga Darine lay, pillowed in her chair, in a senseless swoon!

"*She certainly is failing!* What a barbarity, I must send her home!"—mused Maxutoff, as he awaited the Captain of the Post, now announced.

"Olga! My dear one!" cried Princess Beatrice, who was chafing her friend's hand! *Be brave!* Your noble lover will yet *earn his freedom!* Your mysterious detention, too, will have *its end!* I may lead you home, back to Russia, to a life of *renewed happiness!* What do you fear?"

"Nothing, darling Beatrice! My good angel! *Nothing when near you!* But a presentiment hangs over my heavy heart, of some *danger to Fedor!* When you know his noble character, you will see that his love for *me alone* blinded him!"

"But you are hidden safely *together* now! *One happy winter* is assured to you! And we must *look forward* and *trust in God!*" said Beatrice.——

It was the Arctic evening now, and the mysterious fires were darting in fitful flashes from the distant horizon, which hid her lover!

"Can the Rose of Love bloom under these Northern Lights?"—sadly murmured Olga, as her eyes sought the window from which she watched daily for her absent lover. "See! a ship, and *under Russian colors*, too!"——

Gregory Maxutoff burst into the room in an unwonted excitement! "Beatrice! There is some foul scheme in view! The semaphore says Serge Zubow is back here on his newly purchased vessel,—the 'Nevsky!'—My dispatches say that he has been made *Vice-Governor of Khamschatka*, and *coadjutor of Count Fersen! That gives the brute power over me!*"

—The Princess sprang to her feet, and silently pointed at the sorrowing woman at the window! *It was too late!* As Maxutoff withdrew, ashamed of his precipitate disclosure, Olga Darine seized the delicate hands of her noble protectress! Beatrice saw before her, a shuddering suppliant on her knees,—a woman with the *face* of

an angel, and the *voice* of despair, as she cried, "*It is he! That Tartar fiend! My God! He has power now! Oh! I fear him!*" Too well the agitated singer knew that in some way, Zubow had pierced the mystery of her guarded past! She knew the insolent menace of his eyes! And Fedor, the helpless prisoner! Would he, too, fall under the new official's iron tyranny?

"Listen!" said the Princess, raising her friend and clasping her in her loving arms, "I will insist that Zubow shall now make his home with the Bishop! We will then have peace, and you and I can defy him!"

"But, *Fedor?*" faltered Olga, "Gregory will shield him to the very last. Trust me! With two women watching him, Zubow must be a Machiavel to outwit *us!*"

The Princess was confident. And *yet*, there was a malicious smile of triumph as Prince Serge Zubow announced next day that he would *winter at Sitka!* It brought a chill to Olga's heart!—

The next two weeks crawled away. There were anxious faces around the Prince's board. Little Irma cried for the tall officer who had won her childish heart by ingenious puzzles, by trick and drawing, by paper toys of fantastic design. The stout burghers of Rotterdam did not await the return of their Pioneer forlorn hope vessel, the "Golden Hind," from far Xipangu, in 1588, with the news throwing open a new world to trade, as eagerly as Maxutoff awaited Fedor.

"*I wish he were safely back!* This brute Zubow may take him out of my hands! It will all depend on the *date of Zubow's commission!* Am I to be robbed of the glory of my final administration? *Is there some hidden scheme?*"

Easy-going Maxutoff was at last alarmed! For, beyond visits *far too frequent*, of social courtesy, Serge Zubow,

now luxuriously installed at the Bishop's, was mute.—His ready gold and luxurious private supplies made the lazy clergy his tools.

"Strange," mused Prince Gregory, "in the whole Siberian administration, the prisoner finds his only *real* friend in the *Doctor!* Ministers of pain, they soothe the sorrowing, ease the burden, cheer the dying, and in every way lighten the lot of the hopeless condemned! It is the testimony of fifty years! While the *clergy*, in cards, wine and feasting, seem to ignore the groans of the dying whose irons are struck off by the hand of the guards, only when the prisoned spirit has flown! *I fear this corrupted clergy!*"

Maxutoff dared not confess all his fears to his wife, who shared a secret sorrow with Madame Alten, whom the princely insolent lover knew *now* as Olga, the peerless Olga Darine! Alas! Anton Phillippi, at San Francisco, on his way to distant centres of a yet unhatched conspiracy, had gleaned from the newly arrived Russian Consul and from the gay officers of the fleet, the full story of lovely Olga's past! But one thing was hidden from the now daily importunate Lothario,—it was the secret reason of her *internment!* The princely hands stretched toward her from the throne might even have *stayed him,* in his dark wiles! But, Olga was sadly alone and helpless!——

Refitting his ship at Victoria, in the domains of the hostile Queen of England, Zubow was safe from all official Russian supervision! A winter leave of absence gave him the services of Alexander McMann as second in command of the "Nevsky."

"I can easily join the 'Reindeer' in the spring at Kodiak," said the adventurer.

Zubow mused:

"*And I am now ready for action!* I have a man who knows every inlet of the North Pacific! At Kodiak, Pierre Lefranc is under my secret orders! Phillippi, too, is well on his way to Europe! I will have the *first* news in the spring, from him by cipher telegram from New York to San Francisco, and our confederate, the Consul there, will send a dispatch boat on from Victoria. I can antedate the Czar's dispatches *two months*, for I, thanks to the magic of gold, have my *private news* as soon as the ink dries on the memoranda of the Privy Council! Ha, ha!" chuckled Zubow, "It is as *easy* to buy an *Excellency* as to *bribe* a *sentinel!* One wants easy gotten *gold*, the other is satisfied with a *flood of whiskey!* I can now overcome or checkmate this placid, unsuspecting fool, Maxutoff at will! Wait! *wait!* till that high-bred scoundrel who defied me returns! I will order him on the 'Nevsky' to make charts and map copies! I shall see him triced up and his back bleeding under the lash! He shall remember *the name of Zubow* as long as the welts and scars quiver under the Arctic chill!"—

"Place aux dames!" murmured Serge Zubow, dreaming alone, as his black eyes flamed with a tiger's ferocity! He leaned back in his fur-padded easy chair by the birchen blaze, and drank a huge glass of fragrant Chambertin.

"Let me see!—Petropavlosk, Kodiak and Sitka are all *open ports* in winter! A hidden Prima Donna! She shall sing *in private* for Serge Zubow, Vice-General of the Pacific Siberian Realm! I wonder if Maxutoff suspects my hidden league with Fersen! *I fear him not!* But that lynx-eyed Griselda, his wife,—*I must outwit her!*"——

Olga Darine, returning alone from the great church, was suddenly met on the long ascent of stairs by Serge

Zubow, as a gloomy day showed her in its evening fiery glow,—no silver sail entering the Sitka Sound! For the "Baranoff" still lingered at sea! They were *alone*, and the beautiful prisoner shuddered as she felt his breath *hot upon her cheek!* The rock's perpendicular sheer descent was only separated by the low cedar hand rail. Vodki drinking had emboldened the brute, returning from an artful conference with the now anxious Maxutoff!

"If he means mischief, why does he not *show his hand?*" mused Prince Gregory.

But Olga, whose prayers for Fedor Orlof's return lingered in her heart, knew that the tiger waited for the helpless prey! It was Fedor he would *first* strike! And then—then—

"*Oh! God!*" she screamed as Zubow seized her arm, "One step further and *I will throw myself from the rock! Coward!*"

The panting man loosened his hold on her rounded arm, which bore the purpled marks of the brute's rough grip !——

"You defy me!" Zubow firmly said, "your wings are clipped, but I can see the *song bird's feathers!* I know you,—*Olga, the peerless!* When I have thrown your convict lover to the fishes, *you* shall be taught to sing for *me!* Yes; my pretty dissembler! You *alone*, can save him *from the lash!*"

His scream, his angry threat was lost in the wi. wailing wind! He was *now alone*, for Olga Darine, with the speed of a hunted doe, was already *safe above him*, scaling the height.

That night, the tenderness of even Beatrice Maxutoff's love could not cheer the woman, who, in an agony of sorrow, cursed her twin dower of beauty and of song! The doom was upon her!——

When the moon broke out in a silver flood, the stout Baranoff stood in, wing and wing, through the snow-covered islands, now gleaming like a fairy world in silver! Little sleep had visited Gregory Maxutoff's eyes! He knew *at last* the whole story of 'Madame Alten,'—now to him *Olga Darine!* At daybreak he summoned the Captain of the Guard, and the drowsy sentinels on the beach were astonished to see the Governor's own barge speeding away to the "Baranoff." In the morning's cold gray dawn, Olga Darine felt two loving woman arms around her neck! A sweet voice whispered, "*Have you slept, darling?*" and, a white faced wraith of herself, the singer faltered,

"No!"

"*Then, wake to happiness!* For Gregory has promised me that he will guard you from this fiend! As for Fedor Orlof, he is safe here now under the Imperial flag! *The "Baranoff" is in!* I have begged Gregory to send his own barge for Major Orlof. *See, there it goes!*"

Springing from her couch, Olga caught up her gown of soft priceless white ermine. On her knees, by the window, she watched the boat gliding swiftly to the schooner.

"Be comforted, my dear one!" cried the Princess, for Olga trembled like a leaf in the storm.

"Home again, *in happy Russia,* we will forget these sad days together!"

The beauty,—Madame Alten no more,—darted a passionate glance at her gentle friend,—:

"Happy Russia! *Happy Russia!* I hear that phrase for the *first time* in my life!—*Wherever* the Russian flag floats, the bread of bitterness, the cup of sorrow, goes *as the badge of its heart slavery!* Beatrice!" said Olga, her voice thrilling the tender-hearted listener, "If God

ever delivers me from this desolation, my foot will never tread on Russian soil again! *I swear it by my mother's grave!*"

"I would not lose *you* from my heart!" fondly cried Beatrice,—"See, there comes the boat! Dress now quickly! It may be in Switzerland, in Germany, in Italy, in Austria, or in sunny France, we may make a happy little circle! For Irma loses her heart, her soul, when she loses *you!* Promise me *one thing!*" anxiously whispered Beatrice.

"And that is,——?" earnestly queried Olga.

"If I should be *taken away,*—should you be near,—you will be *a mother to Irma!*" Olga gazed in astonishment at the Princess.

"If *God spares me,* I will be to her what you would wish, should that dear child need my guidance! But what could a woman convict do for the Emperor's protegée, the first Princess of Alaska?"——

—While the two women sat in an interchange of thoughts welling from their secret hearts, the doors opened, and Fedor Orlof was escorted into the cabinet of the Governor General. It was kindly Princess Beatrice who met him, with a meaning smile on her face.—"*Gregory* will see you at ten o'clock! He will be *busied till then!* Your breakfast will be *served here!*" the bright-eyed lady said, as she clasped his hands, and the two guards stalked away.

"Wait here!—this is your *own room,—till ten!* I have ordered the captain of the guard to admit no one, until General Maxutoff so orders!"

The lovely Princess Maxutoff fled unseen, a bright blush on her delicate cheek, for the door opened, and Olga was clasped in the arms of her anxious lover!

There are silences too deep for the power of speech,

too sweet to be broken by aught but the breathings of the beloved, breast to breast, in rapture! The minutes flew unheeded, until at last, Olga Darine, in womanly fear, told the story of the past weeks of trial! She could not conceal Zubow's open passion, his secret pursuit, *his insane threats:*—and while the veins on his temples knotted like whipcords, Fedor Orlof forced a *seeming calmness!*

"Our trust is in these noble friends! As for *me*, as *God wills!* For *you*, my darling.——"

Her sweet voice quivering in the earnestness of a true woman's faith, answered him: "*Death before Dishonor!*"

They were startled as, after a pretense of touching the repast provided, the door from Princess Beatrice's boudoir was flung aside and the Princess hastily entered!—

"Quick, *quick!*" she said, "Both of you,—*in here!* Prince Zubow and the Bishop demand an *instant audience* with Gregory! I go to him! I fear, *I know not what!* Both of you must listen here, behind that curtain, with the door partly drawn. *They cannot see!* You are our witnesses! I will watch at the *other door!*"

The lovers were startled, for the happy hours had fled away uncounted. And, in Olga Darine's heaving bosom, a deadly fear froze the warm blood in the heart where but one image was enthroned!—*Fedor's,*—the man who had suffered to shield her! From the window they could see St. Michael's Church, its Greek cross in form speaking of the Blessed One who died for man, and its silvery bells sounded sweetly on the frosty air! But the old Archimandrite, in furred gown, cap and a huge golden pectoral chain and medal flashing with diamonds, was as crafty as Caiphas, as he plotted with Serge Zubow at the Prince's table! The hidden lovers could see

the merciless scowl on Serge Zubow's face as, in a confident repose, he watched for the Governor General.—

"Your Highness! *Ah! Bishop!*" cried Prince Maxutoff, as he entered in ceremonial dress. "To what do I owe the honor of this *joint* and *urgent* visit?"

Orlof and Olga noticed, with astonishment, as Serge Zubow rose and threw off his light sea-otter cloak, that he was in *full court regalia!* In a cold, harsh voice, the Tartar said:

"I have brought the head of His Imperial Majesty's Church here to see me read the commission which I desire you to enter, on your secret record, as *my warrant of official action in these Seas!*"

Prince Maxutoff, with face as pale as marble, listened, both standing, while *the Czar's pleasure* was made known;—only the old Bishop remained seated,—and dallied with his resplendent badge of rank.—Orlof breathed more freely as Zubow concluded.—It was dated *a year past*, and gave him the royal authority as *Vice-Governor of Khamschatka!*

"It will be so *inscribed*, Your Highness!" calmly said Maxutoff, and I will make the entries with *my own hand!* Will you entrust it to me for that purpose?"

"*Certainly!*" said Zubow, in a cold, triumphant voice, as I propose to act under it *forthwith!*" Orlof's and Olga's eyes met, in a terrified silence! A sigh reached them from the Princess, seated at the door by which Maxutoff had entered to meet his secret foes!—

"I may sail *within a week*, to Kodiak, or Petropavlosk, to *winter*, or perhaps *return!*" began Zubow ominously, "I desire the services on board my ship 'Nevsky' of the Siberian transferred convict *No. 24190!*"

Orlof's strong arm alone kept the beautiful singer from falling!

"*For what purpose,* Prince?" politely queried the Governor General, who was toying with a Japanese dagger.

"To aid me in navigation, mapping and preparing reports of a secret nature!"

Fedor Orlof started as the Siberian tyrant answered, in a meaning tone.

"Is there *anything else* you ask under this extraordinary commission?" politely rejoined the Governor General, "I must have, *a minute in your own hand,* to warrant such a transfer!"—

Olga's trembling fingers clutched Orlof's arm, as he eyed the keen toy dagger in Maxutoff's hand. He trembled like a racer at the post.

"Stay! Yes,—*there is!*" cried Zubow, with now unconcealed insolence. "I wish the guard to escort the *woman prisoner,* known as 'Madame Alten,' to the Church of St. Michael's where the Bishop will assign her to duty, suited to a *woman convict,* in the infirmary as *nurse and seamstress!*"

There was a silence broken only by a stir, as the sound of a gentle struggle behind the curtains proved that Olga Darine's will alone kept Orlof from the room, for *Maxutoff's sabre* was clutched in the desperate prisoner's hand!— "For my sake, wait *until the last!*" she had whispered.

"I regret that I cannot grant *either* of your requests, Prince!" said Gregory Maxutoff, who had sprung to his feet, his slight frame trembling with excitement.

"See if you cannot find a warrant *there!*" cried Serge Zubow, with a loud mocking laugh, throwing down a sealed envelope. *It was the supreme moment!*

"Read it, General, to the Bishop! *He is my witness!*" The Tartar's voice rang out in victory!

In firm tones, Prince Maxutoff read a second document, dated at Petropavlosk, *two months after his departure from Sitka*, signed by the all-powerful Count Fersen, Imperially Delegated Inspector, giving to Prince Serge Zubow *his full proxy in Aliaska*, as well *as Khamschatka!* —It was an infamous treason to the man he professed to respect!—

"You dare not disobey *that?*" yelled Serge Zubow, as he faced the still coldly polite Governor General. "*When* will you deliver me these *two convicts?*"

Olga Darine sank helpless in Orlof's arms, as the aristocratically unmoved Prince Maxutoff returned the letter, saying sternly: "*Never! Your orders are monstrous!*"——

"Do you dare to brave *the Czar's will! Your life may answer for this!*" shouted Serge Zubow, in a transport of rage.

Prince Maxutoff rang his bell, and smilingly seated himself. "*Send me the Captain of the Guard,*" he cried, as his official secretary entered in alarm at the unseemly noise. Princess Beatrice, Fedor and Olga were now a group of three, and gazed spellbound, as Zubow, blind with fury, laid his hand on his sword!——

"Hold, sir! *At your peril!*" sternly cried the fearless Maxutoff, and when the Captain entered, he coldly said:

"Bid the Captain of the Port prevent *all communication* between the ship '*Nevsky*' and *the shore!* Man the batteries and *enforce this!*"—It was now war to the knife!

"Stay, Captain! Sound the officers' call and conduct *all the officers* here to me! Now, sir," said Maxutoff, as he turned to the murderous Tartar, "I shall expel your ship from the harbor, *sink it*, if necessary, unless I know it to be a *legally entered Russian vessel!*—As for convict

No. 24190,—he was sent to me under a special *later* commission of Count Fersen, and transferred on receipt, by the Emperor's order, two months after your proxy was signed! I refuse to consider him in any way under your orders without the *sign manual* of His Majesty, *the Emperor!*"

The old Bishop nodded, and plucked Zubow's sleeve! The officers began to troop in!

"As for the *woman convict* known as '*Madame Alten,*' I will bring her before you!"

Zubow smiled a hideous leer, and threw himself in Maxutoff's vacant seat, as the officers in full uniform, were ranged in a silent row by the Port Captain. Zubow with the bated ferocity of a tiger measuring his spring, waited while a whispered colloquy was heard in the Governor General's room. A woman's choking sob broke on the breathless silence of the scene.

All started to their feet as Prince Maxutoff led the pallid-faced beauty, Madame Alten, into the presence of Serge Zubow, whose eyes now gleamed in triumph! At her right hand queenly Beatrice Maxutoff walked, holding the prisoner's trembling hand! And Fedor Orlof, his blue eyes set and stern, stood on her left

"*I do not want that scoundrel!* Take him away!" boldly said Zubow, who addressed Olga Darine, as one would chide a hound! "*Come here! woman!*"

There was a shudder, and the two supporters alone held the half-fainting woman upright! Her eyes were set, and her marble face was as of a corpse.

"*Do you hear?*" yelled Zubow, with coarse malignity!

"Hold! *Do not obey!*" gravely said Prince Maxutoff, stepping between Serge Zubow and the half-fainting woman. Turning to his secretary, he said: "*Open the Register of Convict Marriages!*"

There was a start of astonishment in the room! The tears coursed down Beatrice Maxutoff's cheeks in silence, as Zubow madly threw himself forward.——

"Be *my own* wife! *My bride! I offer you all! Are you mad?*" he hissed, attempting to seize Olga Darine's hand. Loud murmurs from the officers broke the waiting silence.

"Do you wish to marry *this person?*" said Prince Maxutoff, pointing sternly at the exalted Tartar Prince.

"*I must be a convict's bride!*" faintly fell from Olga Darine's pallid lips, and as Beatrice Maxutoff whispered to her, she added: "*I refuse!*"—She spoke with cold disgust.

"Then, gentlemen," loudly said Prince Maxutoff, "by my authority as Governor General of Aliaska and Walrussia and, under the law of the Empire, *I declare the convict No. 24190, Fedor Orlof, by name,*—and the *woman convict registered as Madam Alten,*—not numbered,—to be *man and wife,* upon their *expressing their choice,* and they will be *so registered!* Do you *so choose and consent?*"

With a flash of fire in their eyes, as pale as the glow of the Northern Lights, the helpless prisoners gazed in each others' sad faces!

"*We do so wish and consent!*" they cried, in hollow tones.

"Then, upon this registry, *I so declare them!*" said the Governor General.

"You *may retire,* gentlemen!" he cried, waving his hand to the officers.

"And *now,* the woman goes with me, *married or not,* she is *under my orders!*" thundered Zubow.

"The penal code prevents the *separation of convict husband and wife* except for *punishment,* or by *their own*

registered wish! Hand me the law!" sternly answered Prince Maxutoff,—

"*Am I right, Bishop?*"

"*You are,* Excellency!" said the frightened prelate.

"Then, I now *order* these two convicts to be entered *as my servants,* and so released *from all penal labors* and the *care of the guard!*" remarked Prince Maxutoff triumphantly.

"You may take *your servants* now," said the Governor General, gently, to Princess Beatrice, as he led his happy wife to the door, followed by the two prisoners *snatched from a living hell!*

A strange wedding, in a strange land!—

In the room, the timid secretary and the old Bishop alone exchanged glances, as Prince Maxutoff said haughtily to Serge Zubow,

"Your Highness! You have entered this house *for the last time,* while I am in the commission of His Majesty, the Emperor! If you have any *petty business,* the Captain of the Port will have *my orders!* If you desire to transact any *important affairs* with me, they can be addressed to me, *through the Chancellerie!* You will observe that I have duly entered the *Emperor's secret commission* to you! It relates *purely* to Khamschatka! The *other document* has no force *to me,*—though it may have *to you,* until it is confirmed by an Imperial rescript! It will be certainly *next season* before that can reach me! Till then I shall obey only the verified orders!"

The Governor General loudly rang his bell. To the Captain of the Guard, who appeared, he said:

"*You will escort His Highness, Prince Zubow, past the guards!* Let *no one* approach in future without my personal order!"—

There was a howl as of a maddened wild beast, when

the Siberian, Serge Zubow left the cabinet of the Governor General.—His brutal eyes were blazing with an unslaked fever of revenge! Baffled at heart, he swore a frightful oath of vengeance, unheard, for exhausted with his victory, Gregory Maxutoff joined his wife, who was standing with the fated couple. —

"You are *now* joined '*hand and heart!*'" cheerfully said Maxutoff, as they turned to him, with grateful eyes: "Beatrice, *you* must busy Olga with her wedding feast, and *you*, in an hour, *Orlof*, shall tell me of the '*Baranoff's' cruise!*"—

When Orlof rejoined Prince Maxutoff in the cabinet, the gold and turquoise circlet gleamed no longer on his hand.

"I may *not* claim you as my wife *before the altar of God*, but your ring has brought me back to you. Take it in witness of my eternal love. It is *all I* have left to give! For Fedor Orlof's *only wealth* now is your love!"—

In the loving ministrations of Beatrice Maxutoff, the pale-faced prisoner bride found a womanly cheer which brought the faint flushes back to her cheek, as delicate as the glow of the spring wild rose on bold Katalan's blood-stained rock!—

"*God fights for us!*" cheerily cried the Governor General, at sundown. "I only wait the return of my Adjutant! *See there!*"

They gazed from the window and saw the heavy sparred "Nevsky" now swarming with men busied loosening her white sails.

"*Good!*" cried Maxutoff, as the officer, returning, handed him a paper, to which he scrawled his sign manual.

"Seal and enter that! *Hasten!* Captain!" cried the Governor.

And in an hour, while they lingered in suspense, the port's heavy steam tug drew the "Nevsky" out into the cold, gray, fog-wreathed inlet!—The roving trader vanished behind the islands!

"So much for a *black-hearted villain!*" said Maxutoff, after dismissing his secretary, who reported the records correctly made,

"I have just now forced Prince Serge Zubow to apply for papers describing the "Nevsky" as *a private ship*, still under *the American flag*,—and bound for Petropavlosk to *change her register* to Russian.—The law *makes him* change her flag only in a Russian *home port!* So that he aimed to order you *on a private vessel*, which is *against the law!*—Of that I have made an official note! —Also that you *were legally married* under the convict code, *before* he received my refusal to order Madame Alten to the *infirmary?* That fact cut off his power over her! I have also signed his ship's clearance as *the American ship 'Nevsky',—unknown owner*,—Prince Serge Zubow, *passenger.*"—

"How could you *force* him to this?" said Orlof, in wonder.

"I had ordered the outer batteries by semaphore, *to sink him*, if he tried to run by without his clearance papers! He could not make an offing, either, *without the tug*, which also gave them their needed supply of water! I warned him *officially*, not to land again in my jurisdiction, until the vessel's papers had been *legally changed!* The Admiral would be obliged to seize his boat *as a pirate!*"

"But his *future resentment?*" Orlof urged. "You have risked all this *for me,—for Olga?*"

"Alas! my poor friend!" said the grateful noble, "*we are not tried by this alone!*—I have other troubles!

Far graver ones! I received a secret packet from a friend in America,—and a Government spy came up, also, on this very ship!—The Consul at Victoria is an old school fellow of mine! A network of villainous schemes is being woven around this Aliaskan transfer. "I dare not *openly* say that Count Fersen, Prince Zubow, their official friends and the great American and foreign capitalists are leagued against the Czar to rob the Crown, but I fear that it is true! To do that, they must outwit, hoodwink, baffle or destroy me! I know not *which* will happen,—but the *real* reason the Government sells Aliaska is now the cause of my present danger! It is *too far* from Russia to be properly defended and supplied, and I cannot get a *confidential dispatch bearer* to Petersburg, as quick as *these banded scoundrels* can! Listen! To-morrow, at noon, the whole official staff will attend a *special church service!* At its close, I order you and your beautiful Olga to present yourselves before the Bishop for the solemn celebration of your marriage. You can appear as my secretary. Once done, it can not be undone! And it gives you the right to church registry!"—

"But the papers, the orthodox ante-nuptial ceremonies?" said Fedor.

"They are useless, there is no such formality *here!*—You are both under my orders! The Bishop *must* pronounce this benediction, and give you proper papers, for he *now* depends on me *alone* for the comfort of his clergy!"

"Prince, it is *useless!*" groaned Fedor, his past life rising up in dark shadows! "But, *I thank you!*" he murmured.

"*Say no more!*" quietly answered the acute official,—"*Your wife has rights!* She has *acted innocently*, and

earned them! There are *no* charges cited against her! She is *only detained!* Zubow did not know that! I could not violate the secrecy of the Privy Council's orders to *confute his claim!* I took the *best course* for your future! *for Olga's!* My wife has given me her whole views! She was a maid of Honor, you know!"

The convict noble bowed.

"Now, you are the *head of your house!*"

Fedor sprang to his feet! It flashed over his mind that his *own hand* had made him the *heir* to the title!

"Your *wife* is *Countess Orlof!*"

"*Spare me!*" shuddered Fedor.

"My friend, there are *other* considerations! Let me lead you in this! Attainder is impossible in Russia!—The innocent may *not* share your burden. And there *may* be brighter days!"—

Orlof bowed in silence.

"My wife has already spoken to *Olga!* In fact, she would not have it *otherwise!* Now,—every leap of that vessel over the waves is bearing my bitterest enemy on to Khamschatka! If *you* have found aught to promise success to our mining hopes, *I* can execute at once the provisional formalities, send the 'Baranoff' to Victoria, and my grant will be *entered* and *registered* at St. Petersburg, *months before* Zubow can counteract it! *He can not suspect!*"—

"Is this true? Have they not watched you?" anxiously said Orlof, thinking of Lefranc, and of the nightly visits of Phillippi, Zubow and the renegade to crafty old Shaman Thom! Did they suspect the real locality of the mine?"

"I can antedate them easily *three months!*" replied Maxutoff, earnestly.

"Then," cried Orlof joyously, "We are safe! For I

have located the source of the gold, within the limits of a *ten mile grant!*"—

Maxutoff laughed! "Why! I can get *fifty miles square!* Can it be definitely enclosed by a survey *within visible land marks?*" questioned the excited Maxutoff.

"I can enclose the *whole area,* beyond doubt!" replied Fedor.

"Then,"—he said,—"Send your working forces to the boat *now,* and have the whole geological collection unloaded! My proofs are *there!* I will draw the plats from your maps here, on a *rough enlargement!*"

Prince Maxutoff sprang to his bell!—In an hour, the working force was staggering up the stairs, under the burden of sacks, casks and boxes laden with Orlof's mysterious specimens.—Maxutoff was eager! He ordered—"Draw the sketch! *To-morrow,* I will have the grant and application papers prepared. You must make *no mistake!* I will not lose a single moment! Have you absolute *proofs?*"

"You shall *see them!*" Orlof proudly answered. "*Wait for the boxes!*"

"*Now!* Your Highness! said Orlof, in a whisper, "Here is the mouth of the Tako! This secret has been kept by the fierce Sundown and Takou savages, under Shaman Thom's awful curse! There is a deep canal,—an inlet,—the two points of the terrific mountain heads of the Tako,—a large island, sixty leagues around, timbered into the very sea, quite elevated,—and near it, *a small green island high and bare!* A ten mile square from the mouth of the Tako includes all! The inlets are always fog-wreathed.—Now, the wily old chief *alone* guards this secret! He would not even let the schooner enter the canal, but I was sent along to these varied points *in a canoe!* We met, on different days, several canoes full

of these sly Indians! I was landed finally with only *one man*, an Indian, who, by signs, told me that *it was the desired spot!* Following your orders, I dissembled my secret satisfaction! I spent three days *alone*, at different times, on *this small island!* I studied and plotted my work from the vessel's charts, and have written you also a *secret description of the local scenery!* It is on the *small high green island*, with scattered pine forests in its sheltered nooks! There, in the ledges and channels, I have scooped *handfuls of gold* from the rotten, dampened guartz gullies!"—

"You are *not deceiving me?*" Maxutoff asked anxiously, and grasped Fedor's arms, in a nervous grip:—"*And the Indians?*"

"They think the gold is only in the black sand *of the rocky shore*, where the gold washed down by the torrents mingles with the heavy shore layer! But the *whole island* is *one vast mass of gold quartz!* There are *millions of dollars lying there*, guarded only by the timid deer who swim the inlet to crop the tender moss and straggling grass! The decomposed quartz, in the ravines, furnished me my store! Here is the sketch: This island must be the one marked here "*San Carlos*," by Ayala and Quadra, and "*Douglas Island*," by Vancouver! I have the old drawings and sketches, so you can *not mistake!* There is but *one such island*, but it *is hard to find!*"—

"Your first trip *in the spring* shall be to complete the survey, and I will make the grant for twenty miles square from the Tako Inlet! But, here are all the specimens," said Maxutoff, as the orderly officer reported.

"There is only one case that I want!"—whispered Orlof, I brought the rest only *as a blind!*"

They were alone.-

"Can I call the Princess and——?"

"*The Countess,*" said Maxutoff, with a smile.

"*Yes!*"

And while the two beautiful assistants looked on, Fedor Orlof, with strong blows broke open a heavy barrel, which he had rolled in from the gallery!—He knew its secret mark at once! Overturning it, he threw out one after another, a dozen *raw hide ammunition pouches!* They were concealed in layers of moss. Opening the first, he poured out on the polished table, a *dull yellow heap of roughened golden grains,* varying in size, mixed with black sand, and buried in a shower of fine golden scales! It was a precious heap of virgin gold!

"There is five thousand roubles, *in native gold,* in *each* of *those pouches!* I brought *all I dared!* Every runlet and ravine has *its treasure!*"

The ladies were clasped in each other's arms, as Maxutoff threw up his arms in delight.

"It is *an untold fortune!* It *gives us all wealth!*"—

"*May it also bring us happiness!*" said Orlof, solemnly, as he kissed gentle Beatrice Maxutoff's hand——

"*And no one knows?*"—the Prince Governor was breathless.

"The crew suspect nothing! I urged old Shaman Thom to encourage my trade with his men! You can see the crafty old pagan and question him yourself. He told me truly that the fierce Indians of *these tribes* fight all *others* away, and gleaning the shores of the island, *divide the gold* and trade it off later! They think it *comes up from the sea!*"

"And you are *sure* of the *quartz formation?*" demanded Maxutoff.

"I have brought *barrels of the rock* in its *raw,* its *powdered,* and its *partly rotten* state! This is not alluvial gold like the hydraulic drift of Siberia, of California of

the African, and Eastern American gold fields! It is quartzose and volcanic, like the Mexican, South American, Rocky Mountain, and Australian drifts, though *both* forms may be met *at once!*"—

The evening stars were shining in peace:—and all the circle wove dreams of a happy future!—

"Let us conceal all this treasure, my friends!" said Maxutoff, joining their hands. "We *four here present* hold a *golden secret!* Now, I claim the rights *of host! To-night,* in quiet, we enjoy your wedding feast,—*to-morrow,* the grants shall be prepared, and I will send the 'Baranoff' to Victoria, with my sealed dispatches! My right to enter this grant is *undoubted!* I will stipulate for all fishing, timber, agricultural and mineral ownership! The Czar will refuse *me* nothing I ask!"—

"Before your marriage ceremony at the church to-morrow, Orlof, you shall give me the maps *in quadruplicate.* —I will have all the entries in the archives made, and the grants will be in *my name,* and that of *my heirs,* as well as that of *the Countess Orlof and her heirs!* Irma, *as Princess of Alaska,* can protect your wife's interests! This will leave *your name out of it,* and the Petersburg officials will think it only a distant partnership!—Fersen told me the Emperor would give me this new dignity of Prince of Alaska on my presentation when I return!"——

"*After that,*" and Maxutoff smiled, "until the spring clears away the snows so you can go and take possession *for me,* under pretense of a detailed survey of the Tako Lynn Channel, Admiralty Island and Douglas Island, I shall expect *you,* Fedor, to make my working days lighter, and *my dear Olga, you* have your lovely charge, *Irma!* If you as *husband and wife,* can not find happiness *under the Northern Lights,* it will not be chargeable to my harshness! *Try and forget! Live in your love!*"—

In the enchanted weeks which fled away, secure under noble Maxutoff's protection, the lovers, now united before the altar of God, forgot the ban *laid on them by the law!*—A seeming paradise was opened to them!——

"Could *anything* add to our happiness?" whispered Countess Olga, now freed from Serge Zubow's ominous presence. They were walking in the silent halls of Baranoff Castle, the cedar citadel builded on the great rock, which the rich Baranoff left on his homeward voyage, going only to *his sudden death!*—

Maxutoff and his wife were dashing over the valley snows below, with willful little Irma,—delighted at her wild sleigh ride!—The patent and grant papers now only needed the *Emperor's august hand*, for three months had glided away in an unbroken happiness! Beautiful Olga Orlof's voice often thrilled through the great halls in happiness, and the evenings under the magical play of the glowing, flashing Northern Lights were but a prelude to busy and contented days! Loving, lovely and *beloved.*—Olga never heard the rustle of the robes of the beautiful, ghostly bride, the White Lady of Baranoff Castle, who was found dead, in the dim anteroom, when her princely lover waited in vain for an unwilling bride! For the mad lover of her heart had sacrificed the one dearer than life to him to save her from *another*, and then thrown *himself* on the rocks! Innocent Olga was shadowed by no foreboding as she spoke! But, even in his hours of supreme happiness, Fedor Orlof turned his eyes often to where Russia lay, beyond the rim of the gray, heaving waste of waters! *There*, he seemed to see again, *as ever*, the accusing face of the fatherless Vera Orlof,—the little cousin whom he had once fondled, even as he now caressed his wife's graceful charge, *Irma Maxutoff!* Always, *that fair young face*, wistful

and saddened, *in an orphan's weeds*, seemed to gaze on *him*, the innocent lips whispering: "*Where is my father?*"

For the passing years had only told him that he could make no fitting atonement!—

He turned and kissed his wife in silence as she repeated her question:

"If there *must* be retribution, let it fall *on me alone!*" murmured Orlof as he presssed his beloved to his haunted heart.—

It was seven months since Serge Zubow saw Sitka's lights fade away as he paced the "Nevsky's" deck in frantic rage, when a stout cutter drove into the sound, and Prince Maxutoff met it at the icy strand.—It was the secret dispatch boat of his agent in British Columbia, now at Victoria.—By the *telegraph* over Europe,—the *steamer* to New York, and *telegraph* to San Francisco and Portland,—thence by *secret message* to Victoria, he awaited news of the confirmation of his concession, and the final transfer of the great *American domains* of the Czar!

The schooner "Baranoff" was now ready to flit forth at any moment, and bear Orlof through the sea-washed gorges of the Sitkan Archipelago, over the cool, sparkling waters ot the land-locked inlets, swarming with silvery fishes, past the overhanging majesty of the great snow peaks of the wild land, to glide under the sculptured walls of the Ice Kings's blue crystal palace,—the glacier land of eternal silence and entrancing beauty. There, the icy architecture glowed pink and golden in the marvellous sunsets, or shimmered in silvery whiteness when the pale moon gleamed on the savage beauty of the wild pagan's homes!

Orlof was ready to go forth now and hold the golden

treasure island for his princely friend, and the dear ones linked in the ambitions of the coming years. From Baranoff Castle, the Princess and her friend, the wife of a prison romance, watched the Prince and Orlof hastening homeward.

"I am filled *with a strange fear!*—I know not *why!*" said Olga Orlof, as she leaned her head on her friend's breast.

"There is no shadow now! Zubow will *never return!* He must have wintered at Kodiak or in Khamschatka. We will have glad tidings!" cried Princess Beatrice, as her husband's smiling face met her gentle, inquiring gaze.

"*Victory!*" cried Prince Gregory, as he led the friends into his cabinet. "I have *full home* dispatches and a *cipher telegram.* The provinces will be turned *over to the Americans,* in October, next year! The Czar will have six hundred thousand square miles less territory. *And we then all will go home!* I will have Orlof pardoned! I have had the land grant duly entered and sealed at St. Petersburg! *The Island is forever Mine!*"—

Joy and gladness reigned! Happiness shone on every brow! But the fair face of Countess Olga *alone* was shadowed with the strange sadness, as the "Baranoff's" day of sailing dawned! With a delicacy all his own, Prince Gregory arranged to give Orlof his last instructions for his month's absence, on the tug which was to accompany the schooner up the strait for some hours.——

"Take this *last* day *for yourselves!*" said Maxutoff.—"You are free to return here, Fedor, as soon as you have recognized the island and *definitely* located it! Make all the legal surveys needed!—You can *then* leave

the Sergeant's guard to build huts, and I will send up *later*, supplies for a season's comfortable stay. My grant being properly recognized in the diplomatic transfer, our labors are done! We must only file the maps at home!—You will find a congenial winter's occupation in aiding me in the transfer, for I will have detailed instructions as to the evacuation by the first spring war vessel!—

Irma Maxutoff, with childish concern, clung to her father when the great doors of Baranoff Castle were opened, as Orlof left his love, with streaming eyes and trembling lips in the arms of Princess Beatrice! On the threshold, he turned back to clasp Olga *once more* in his arms, to whisper those burning words of love which sent the sudden color even now to her pallid cheeks! One last embrace, *and he was gone!*——

From the deck of a schooner, Fedor Orlof, a prayer on his lips, watched the last gleam of the white signal fluttering in the delicate blue-veined hands, still tingling with his kisses!—He set his face to the lonely North, and a darkness, greater than that of the growing night, fell on his soul, as the "Baranoff" stood away toward Tako inlet.—

A week of baffling navigation, days of waiting for the uncertain natives and several trips in canoes managed by strange savages, wore out the brightness of Orlof's handsome face. "Can it be that these natives have been secretly *tampered with!*" he mused, as he returned to the schooner's old landing place, a safe anchorage, baffled and tired out, day after day! He *dared* not use force, and he *could* not confer with the officer in command of the vessel upon his secret quest! It would expose the secret relations!——

As he arose, after a night of unrest, for one more

determined effort to find in the winding channel the "*small, high green island*" he sought, he pondered on the risk of leading the schooner's long boat in himself. "One *more* trial of the natives!" he muttered, as he noted the courses and memoranda of the day in his journal. The sailors were chafing at the apparently useless delay in the inlet!——

The pen fell from his hand, in the gray of the foggy dawn, as he saw the *fatal date!* It was the *anniversary* of his unexpiated crime! In dejection and silence he left the "Baranoff's" side in a canoe manned by a dozen low-browed Eskimo. For hours, through the fog and changing currents, the chattering pagans paddled him from inlet to inlet. It was the same blind riddle as before!—

His brain whirled with fantastic recognitions. He could not verify in the weary hours of the voyage the scenery of the year before. And over his mind to-day hung the clouded sadness of his unholy deed, the bitter memories of the prison. Even Zubow's cold malignity returned to depress him! Alone with the savages, *unarmed*, save with a heavy hunting knife, he noted the varied shores, fog-wreathed and changing, as the canoe whirled in the swift, green current! His mind strayed away from his task as the sweet face of Olga, *his waiting wife*, the prison flower of his heart, came to distract him!—Her eyes seemed to beam on him, deep in the wifely tenderness which has given to love a *newer, holier* name!—His eyes grew fond and dreamy as he trailed his hand over the side of the light canoe to test the turning current. "Would he *ever* lead the beautiful woman back to freedom and the home of her happy youth? For they had promised in their dreams of a golden future that *some day*, in a far-off Italian town,

hidden under the crags of beautiful Sorrento, they would, should Love lead the way to Liberty, retrace the paths dear to Olga Darine in her untroubled *girlhood!* That, hand in hand,—they would walk by the purpling seas where her child-voice first broke out into song as sweet as the morning lark!——

Suddenly, a sullen Indian grasped his arm! The fog had blown off, and before him, half a mile away, lay the well-remembered high *bare green island,* with its unreaped golden harvest hidden in cleft and rusty quartz ledge! He sprang to eager action!

"Ah! I have been paddling *around it,* and turning always to the *left* out through the *wrong* inlet!" cried Orlof, awake now to every moment's value. For with his compass and sextant he could locate from its summit, a few hundred feet high, the well-known headlands and even the schooner's very position!

On the light canoe dashed, and, springing ashore at the nearest point, Fedor bade the crew rest and await him! He must do this vitally important work *alone!* He *dared* not risk faithless followers! From the first high knoll, as he rapidly took a round of shore bearings, he could plainly see the schooner's top masts and fluttering signal two leagues away. *It was, in very truth, the golden island!* The secret of its position in the channel-head was at last explained, for he now noted several *false inlets* and connecting *straits* of the involved fiords! In a half hour he had finished his vitally necessary observations on the summit and entered them in his note book!—

Oppressed with the silent loneliness, a treasure unclaimed lying in the dingy rocks under his feet, he returned his steps towards the canoe's landing place. He descended slowly into the gully, in whose soft run-

let sands he had scooped up the gold which Maxutoff now treasured! *It was the future fortune of his darling wife!* —The bushes and low trees shaded the banks of the ravine! Suddenly, he uttered a quick exclamation of surprise, for before him on the moist sands of the creek were the *fresh prints* of *booted feet!*—

A vague alarm seized him! He sprang toward a knoll from whence he could see the whole channel.—"Had some *wandering whaler* found the Golden Island? Was there a secret party hidden near?" He would return and take possession with the whole force, and *then* send a canoe at once paddling back for reinforcements and orders! As his tall form straightened itself in the forward movement a sharp, double report rang out, and Fedor Orlof *sprang into the air*,—crashing down in his fall, even as *the forest oak!* His lips trembled in the last word "*Olga!*" and, before the beloved name had sounded on the echoing air, with a shudder and a quiver of the muscles, the strong man's spirit fled forever!—The echoes died away in hollow reverberations on the lonely hills!——

Two burly forms sprang out from the shaded copse;—*one* was seal-skin clad and hooded, *like a native!*—He grasped a heavy pistol ready for use in his clenched hand! *It was the traitor Pierre!*——

"It is useless! *He is finished off!*" growled a brutal voice, and burly Serge Zubow, clad in a Russian sailor's garb, stood *gazing fiercely* at the body of his prostrate foe!——

"What shall *we do with him?*" muttered Pierre Lefranc, for by the hand of *his one time comrade*, Fedor Orlof had died in a foul murder! And far away Olga's loving eyes were raised to Heaven in a prayer for him!

"Leave him *for the wild beasts!*" roughly muttered

Zubow. "Here search him! *It is your job!* His death is the *price of your freedom!* I care not for the task! I am satisfied! He will brave Serge Zubow *no more!* Make haste! Cross over the island! I want to drop down the whaleboat with the current! But, what in the devil's name was *his party* doing *here?*"

The moody brute, Zubow, a double-barrelled rifle in his hand, strode swiftly over the ridge to where his boat's crew lay hidden on the land side of the island.

"I have not *entered a port,*" he laughed, "only *touched at an island!*" With trembling fingers Pierre Lefranc cut away the dead man's field glasses and picked up the sextant lying by the murdered noble's side! There was a marvellous beauty in the fair manly face, waxen in death! Lefranc fled away like a madman, for the brave blue eyes gazed heavenward, as if imploring God's pardon! Fedor Orlof had made the atonement of innocent blood at last! And his beloved wife prayed for him far away on this day of gloomy memory!—

"I can hide *this* from all! Zubow will never land here *again!* He only followed Orlof here on this mad *revenge!* The secret of this place is now *mine, mine alone!* And when the Yankees take the land, *I* will be the owner of this *treasure stored islet!*" Pierre chuckled in glee.

As he overtook Zubow, crashing through the bushes, Lefranc hoarsely cried: "*Nothing* but this field glass and the sextant!"

"Ah! *a scientific survey!*" growled Zubow.—"It is over! Come! *Hurry on!* I will get the ship out from behind Admiralty Island and fifty leagues at sea before this *fellow is found!* I will land *you* at Khamschatka, with orders to send you over to Kodiak in the *first*

vessel! Your *pardon and discharge* shall be in your pocket *when you land! You have earned it!*"——

Before the next dawn, the "Nevsky," beating to seaward like a fierce cormorant, drove away over the rough waves of Behring Sea, bearing off moody Zubow, maddened with brandy, for *he too* saw the brave blue eyes of Orlof gazing clearly towards the heavens above! Pierre Lefranc, now instinctively avoiding his murderous master, clutched now the papers that made him free! A strange hallucination seized him when the effect of his daily vodki debauches left him! He could hear Orlof whisper: "*We are partners,—comrades! We will live or die together!*" And the brute, cowering in his hammock, tried to shut out the fate of "his silent partner!"

It was days before the stern naval officer, who paced the "Baranoff" deck, was met at his ship's side by his faithful crew, bearing back Orlof's body! He had seized all the natives, and forced a search, sending a squad of armed sailors out with every canoe! In the cabin, he listened in solemn gravity to the old boatswain, who delivered him Count Orlof's *note book* and the small articles found on his body.

On the deck, guarded by a sentinel, lay the body of the dead soldier! The Lieutenant sprang to his feet as the old sailor said: "*Murdered! and by white men!* For there were the tracks of two men wearing *new sea boots* and he was shot with a metallic cartridge rifle at short range!"

In the fitful flashes of a terrible storm, the "Baranoff" was forced to run out to sea, to avoid the black squall now breaking on the dangerous coast!

Sealing up all the articles delivered to him, the commander, with all the observance due the rank of the man

now freed forever from all earthly bonds, steered into Sitka Sound, with his colors reversed in distress!——

Beside her chosen watch station, at the seaward window fair Olga Orlof, glass in hand, swept the blue expanse toward the north. It was on a sunny morning, when leading his silent wife, her face white with a sudden terror, Prince Gregory Maxutoff approached the waiting Olga and gently took the glasses from her hand! With one quick glance at Beatrice Maxutoff's eyes, the Countess Orlof fell prone and *senseless* at her friend's feet! The tidings of the semaphore were telegraphed in advance of the slowly gliding schooner, drifting down, bearing the husband lover home in the stillness of death, to the woman whose beloved name trembled on his dying lips! *And so, Stephan Orlof was avenged at last!*

It was a month later when a graceful figure, shrouded in black, descended the winding stairs of Baranoff Castle! It was the widowed Countess Orlof, at whom the sentinel, presenting arms to the Governor General, gazed in awe! No angel carved in Parian marble, watching over a tomb, in frozen loveliness, was paler than this mute lovely mourner! She leaned on Prince Gregory's arm, and her eyes rested sadly on the tall spars of a fleet Russian frigate, the herald of the summer fleet!

The streets of the village were thronged with officers, as the only carriage of the settlement awaited the Prince and his charges. These chivalrous Russians whispered their sympathy as the beautiful vision was lost to sight. Their hearts were touched with sorrow.

"*So strange!*" said Commander Linieff, now on his return, with promotion,—"I am told," he turned to his executive officer, "that the Countess Orlof's pardon

includes *every reinstatement!* Prince Maxutoff has told me that he has grave fears for her health! The mysterious *murder* of her husband has apparently *affected her mind!* She may go down to California with us on the 'Rurik,' but I doubt if she will ever leave the Princess! It is only a year now, till we will haul down the St. Andrew's Cross forever from "Baranoff Castle!"

"Ah! They will *then go home together!*" said the junior.

"So I am told! Prince Gregory wishes to begin the education of that charming fairy sprite, Irma!—She must be an *ideal* Princess of Alaska!—And, I presume, the ladies will settle temporarily on the continent. It will take the Governor Maxutoff *fully a year* to turn over all this vast realm, and rejoin them. The land will be soon overrun with the prying Yankees and all sorts of adventurers. The American flag will draw the outcasts of the whole west hither! It is wise that the Prince sends his family circle out as soon as he can! The new era will only be a *wild scramble!*"——

"Captain! *Who* will fall heir to the immense fur interests and trading business *here?*" said the subordinate.

"Oh! *the smartest*, as the Yankees say," laughed Linieff, for he had been brightened up by friendly intercourse with the American navy and occasional visits to San Francisco. "*Poor Orlof!*" he said, as he turned away to his boat, "*he deserved a better fate!* Was it some wandering British or American thieves, fur hunters, who slew this man, to cover their presence? *No!*" thought the generous minded officer, "those adventurous men are not of nations that boast the *assassin's trade!* I fear it was some *dark revenge!* Now, could *Zubow*"—

he dismissed the haunting idea with a frown, as he entered his waiting boat! "*No!* He was *three thousand miles away*, in Khamschatka!"

But before the snows of another winter crawled down the sides of Mount Edgecumbe, gallant Linieff was possessed by an innate feeling that some dastardly crime lurked behind the mystery of Fedor Orlof's untimely cutting off! The rage of Serge Zubow, when he heard of Olga Orlof's *pardon* was unbounded! For a Grand Duke of Russia lay dead now *in a foreign land!* A stately tomb rose over the Czarevitch who had hung enthralled on Olga Darine's accents, and the beautiful woman, weeping by the grave in the exquisite valley of Indian River, was free in her widowhood to bring *her unhealed sorrows* back to fair Europe! The mute singer's bonds were loosened! She was a menace to the Russian Crown *no more!*—

As she plucked the first wild rose blooming over the mound where Fedor slept, unmindful of the thundering salute of the "Rurik's" guns, Olga Orlof clasped her friend in her arms:

"I will stay here, *near him, with you*, until—we leave the land of snows and sorrows *together!*"

"It is well!" answered Beatrice Maxutoff, "And my Gregory will guard *your* interests, for Fedor's *note books* and *surveys* have clearly indicated luckless Treasure Island! It will be watched, *for us*, for *you*, and for, perhaps, *some one* who in happier years may learn from you that to a *dead father's sacrifice*, the restored fortune of the Orlof's may be traced!"——

BOOK II.

UNDER A NEW FLAG.

CHAPTER VI.

BARANOFF'S CASTLE EN FETE—THE LAST DAYS OF EMPIRE—THE FOOT OF THE STRANGER—HOMEWARD BOUND—"FRENCH PETE."

It was in the early days of October, in the year of our Blessed Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven, that two wistful-faced women gazed seaward from Baranoff Castle on a view which brought the bitter tears of the past to mingle with the joys of a coming release from the seclusion of years. Below the old stronghold, where the war flag of the Romanoff's still streamed out defiantly to the wind, a motley fleet lay anchored! The blood red flag of haughty England floated on the chill afternoon breeze, and near it sparkled the star flag of the new masters,—the United States of America!—There were several stout merchantmen claiming a port welcome, under the white, blue and red horizontal tri-color of Russia!——

"The *last days* are quickly coming to us now, Olga!" said Beatrice Maxutoff. "See! There is the *American fleet!*" The Princess handed Countess Orlof the glasses she had listlessly toyed with.

"Gregory will be pleased, for he is so anxious for his relief! The bureau duties of this last year have nearly exhausted him. It would have been *so different* if"——

The gentle Princess paused, for from the favorite window station, Olga Orlof, *now the white Countess*, fled in haste, as her ears caught the sound of a quavering voice! *The cry of Fedor Orlof's fatherless child!*——

"It is nothing!" simply said Countess Olga, "he always seems to prefer *me* to his nurse, Katia."

Below them, in stately procession, the American squadron, the heavy steamers "Ossipee" and "Resaca," with the sturdy old sloop of war "Jamestown" in tow, were now sweeping silently down, their men at the batteries, and every port open! At each main truck, the red, white and blue streamer, and at the bow, the blue jack, told of the national character. Beside the great national ensigns, a Commodore's pennant told that courtly McDougall was ready, with Captain Emmons and Bradford, to accept the indefinable sovereignty of the lonely Behring Sea, so long battled for stoutly by the heirs of Peter as "mare clausem!"——

The friends gazed in silence, as the stately vessels dropped anchor, and the amphitheatre of Sitka harbor echoed back the thunder of the Yankee heavy guns, saluting for the *last time* Alexander II, in his prison as Lord of Aliaska! The ladies were alone, for Prince Gregory Maxutoff, and his superior officers were ready, in glittering regalia, to receive and return the punctilious visits of ceremony!——

Though anxious at heart to leave the narrowed theatre of the woes and hardships of the lonely years, Beatrice, beautiful and proud, burst into tears, as the guns of the new masters, in measured diapason, told that the *Romance of the Old* was at an end!

At her side, a growing slip of fairy girlhood, bright-eyed Irma, longed for the day when she would be borne away to the fabled delights of Home! The star-eyed

daughter of the refined, aristocratic mother was to be led over land and sea to the glittering, restless, throbbing life of great St. Petersburg!

For the future heiress of Treasure Island must be nurtured in the classic seclusion of the guarded "Catherine Institute," to sparkle as a jewel of the living ornaments of the Imperial Russian Crown! She would join that fadeless band of laughter-loving maids of honor, whose merry voices alone wake the ominous stillness of the Winter Palace!——

Across the heaving sea the young sisterhood of her high-born kinswomen was calling the little Arctic snow Princess home to a wider circle, to happier hours, to drink in future years of that sparkling cup of bitter-sweet,—*Russian Society life!*—The life, gay and yet pathetic, where the merriest laugh sinks into a sob, where smiles and tears make the wintry rainbows of the Neva!——

—The town was now full of eager strangers, who had filtered in, awaiting the transfer. A sudden, excited life, a mushroom extension, an incoming wave of the luxuries of the shop-keeper and publican startled the stolid soldiers of the Czar, the half-breeds and human wrecks, who had eddied in, and also filled the wonder-Aleuts, Kalushes and Eskimo with awe!——

Prince Gregory's brow was now deeply furrowed, his hair streaked with silver, and his eye faded. The loss of Fedor Orlof was irreparable, for the anxieties of the official transfer, the fatiguing ceremonies, and the great responsibilities of his Imperial Master's properties were all centred in him! His heart throbbed with haunting daily cares! Three millions of dollars in the fur tribute of two seasons to convey to Russia, around the Cape of Good Hope,—

the care of garrisons,—the moving of home-returning subjects to Alexander, all these great trusts weighed upon him! The impending departure from his family, added to his anxieties, for *beside* his own loved, Fedor Orlof's *wife and child* were now a legacy of honor!

"I hope to see the little man righted!" the kindly Prince would say, "I may even live to see him lead his *father's squadron* past the Czar on the Field of Mars! He deserves to *come to his own!* Strange, that Countess Olga has named the boy *Stephan!* The head of the old line! It will serve to warn the poor orphan of the dreadful crash of *passion's deadly storms!*"

But the beautiful, pallid widow thought alone of the past!

"My Fedor's death was the expiation of *innocence!* A *life* for a *life!* It was *all* he had to give! But, in this *new* life given in the whiteness of unpolluted infancy, to the Orlof line, may the *sad past story* be forever buried! He is the *child of my sadness!* Let him then, be named *Stephan!*"

Few of the dignitaries swarming Sitka, in its last year of Russian sway, sat at Gregory Maxutoff's board! True, the territory swarmed with visitors, noble and mercantile! There seemed to be a mysterious flicker of Muscovite activity on the American shore of the ocean! Maxutoff vaguely distrusted all these new comers! He however opened the great hall to lavish hospitality, but the *family* table of his enclosed mansion was guarded always by an unbroken reserve! The beautiful *wife* of the Governor General, and *Irma*, the fairy of Katalan's Rock, were known to all! The Princess regularly visited the officers' families in the garrison, and even labored *in the hospital;*—at church, she was continually seen, with her daughter, now springing into girlhood's

blossom!—The Czar's subjects were her own wayward children!

But to the *new comers*, the *white Countess Orlof* was only a mysterious, beautiful presence denied their sight! *True*, on the galleries of Baranoff Caslle, a graceful form was seen pacing often, but always gazing seaward! The devout sentinels watching her gliding movements, would cross themselves and mutter:

"*There* she walks! She is calling him *home from sea!—The white Countess!*"

Only a silver haired old Russian Admiral, his Emperor's friend as well as faithful warrior, broke into the guarded seclusion of the year of mourning! Bearer of the Czar's final mandates and last orders, he sat long hours with Prince Maxutoff in his cabinet room, and the gay veteran was the ambassador of a gentle stranger! He had a beloved wife and dark-eyed laughing Russian daughters, far away in the nest even now ready for his retirement, on the romantic shores of Finland, and *he, alone*, was admitted to the family life of the Maxutoffs! He spent happy hours with little Irma, a fearless sprite, playing with ribboned star and order glittering on the manly breast, which he had so often bared in battle's storm for the Czar! The Officers of the Guard started, when on the gallery now known as "Countess Olga's Walk," the silent widowed beauty was seen, clinging to his arm! It was, to them, a miracle!——

But he had brought secretly, letters to her from the ardent girl who ruled now in Stephan Orlof's great granite palace on the Admiralty Quai! It may be that among the ladies of the Empress, some delicate patrician, clinging to Fedor Orlof's knightly memory, had told sweet *Vera Orlof* all the tangled

intrigue of her father's death, and her handsome uncle's crime! *Perchance,* the romantic impulses of her own friendless youth led her to picture the face of the woman for *whose love* a Czarevitch *sighed in vain!* Youth's tender heart is filled with the swaying enthusiasm of sympathy! The proud girl may have sorrowed to know, the last Orlof, the future *head of the line,* a helpless dependent on the bounty of a strange friend, raised up in adversity!—There were long hours of private conference,—and many days when the widowed Olga sat communing with her own heart by the cradle of her fatherless child!

Prince Gregory's eyes were mutely expectant of some disclosure!—But *all* he knew was that there were *no secrets* between his faithful Beatrice and the strangely met sister of her heart! He saw in an exquisite miniature, the lovely face of *Countess Vera Orlof,* and was touched, with an unavailing storm of sad regrets, to note the *startling likeness* of the Flower of St. Petersburg to the unhappy man who died alone on the yet unspoiled Treasure Island!——

With friendly anxiety, Prince Gregory listened to the murmur of the gallant old Admiral's voice, in earnest pleading,—and to the soft whispers of Olga's answers! He easily divined that the forgiving and generous-hearted Countess Vera wished to make amends for the sadness of the past, and offer to her new kinswoman the shelter of the old Orlof palace. He was fain to be content with the Admiral's evident great respect for the widowed Olga, and the frank friendly cordiality of their intercourse. But her proud sorrow was silent! He marked the hours of Olga's labors writing at her desk, and was satisfied when his steadfast wife said:

"All will be well,—they will grow together naturally in the happy days to come!"——

And so it was, that only on the Lord's days and the great festivals, the dwellers of Mount Edgecumbe knew that the lovely mystery still lingered among them, for then there was a veiled, black-robed figure masked, seen silently stealing to the curtained alcove whence the exquisite singing welled forth which made even the rough adventurers murmur in astonishment! A memory of the past, a prayer for the future!—

"It is the voice of *an angel*," they cried.—Olga Orlof kneeling alone before the altar of the silent, deserted church of St. Michael's, could almost see, when she turned to go, the gallant man whose heart life was linked to her own by memory's chords forever! For Fedor seemed to stand there again before her, brave, alert,—his noble face glowing with the tenderness of loyal love!—He never seemed to her to *be dead!*—But *only* sailing far away on that unknown sea, where lay '*the high green island*,' with its rocks of gold!

After the friendly Russian Admiral had swept away with his fleet, Prince Maxutoff was deeply concerned to receive letters from him, at Kodiak, from the Prybiloff's, from the Komandorski group, at Plover's Bay and far Khamschatka! A last corvette returning brought him these confidential warning letters from his friend! He had *much* to marvel at! Secure now, in his registered and duly entered patent for the Tako River grant, the Governor General had withdrawn even his guard posts from the vicinity of the lonely isle where Orlof died. The *diary*, the survey *note books*, even the last *observations* from the hill where his presence was unwittingly betrayed to the assassins, had enabled the Prince to enclose *all the gold-bearing* lands in the formal grant.

He could not himself leave Sitka! He dared not *now* confide to others! He had, however, sent back the stout Lieutenant of the "Baranoff," and had the lonely island searched and examined for any traces of the murderers! Storms, however, had obliterated all the tracks or evidences of human presence, but two things finally rewarded the search: *First*, the proof that Orlof's field glasses and sextant had been *carried away!* And, after examining all the natives with due caution, the discovery that a *whaleboat* had been seen cruising in Lynn Canal at the time of the murder! There was no *whaleboat* at all with the "Baranoff!" The *sole* explanation was that a stranger ship had *touched* at Admiralty Island! The ignorant natives could tell no more than that it was not a "*fire ship*,"—but a "*wind ship!*"—That it flew no colors!—

Who manned that deadly pirate?—The query was a hopeless one!

Prince Gregory breathed freely to know his hidden mines were undisturbed;—but the visit of the *whaleboat* lingered with him to suggest dark suspicions! A mere marauder would not have taken from the body, only the sextant and field glasses. Why were the papers and *his own* valuable watch, even *Orlof's knife* left untouched? Only an *intelligent* person would have stolen the glasses and instrument! Was there a need of hurry? Did some *one conscience-stricken assassin fear* to handle the helpless corpse?—Only the "Nevsky" had whaleboats, and *yet*, it was surely at Khamschatka!——

Other grave matters pressed daily on Prince Maxutoff's mind.—The town of Sitka was now thronged with eager-eyed strangers and great numbers of these had reached Tongass, Fort Wrangell, Kodiak, and there had even been the visit of a phantom-like schooner at the

Prybiloffs. The first fur seal pirate! The harpies were gathering! The Indians were found to have been supplied with *rum, arms,* and even *fresh minted American gold,* and several other lawless incursions came finally to light!—The mystery was heightened when the Admiral's full secret dispatches also reported later that several valuable cargoes of seal skins had been carried away from the Komandorski, and the Prybiloff Islands, by two unknown vessels; *one,* a heavy whaler, *the other,* an armed brig, filled with a strange medley of men and *flying no colors!*—Landing a few sailors and firing random shots, these pirates easily drove the timid natives under cover, and after robbing the unprotected fur magazines, and slaughtering some thousands of seals, had sailed away!—Along the lonely Siberian coast, the wail of the plundered natives arose, for great stores of whalebones, ivory and vast values of the rare Khamschatkan furs had been also looted by these men, who, trading *drugged rum,* had left the Tchuktches and Khamschatkans to starve despoiled of their only treasures!—

When the wearied Prince learned from his *own* dispatch schooners that the great annual native gathering at Icy Cape and Blossom Island had been forcibly robbed *by armed men,* of the whole stock of furs gathered for the yearly barter between the natives of both shores of Behring Straits, he was astonished! For near here, a Kayak can cross in safety from Asia to America! It was by this easy road that the tartar Asians wandered over to be the sires of the American Indians of the plains!

"I could perhaps pierce this shadowy mystery if old Shaman Thom were alive!" the Governor mused. But the wily old pagan's great funeral totem mast stood now high in air, within plain sight of the lonely grave of murdered Fedor Orlof, on the romantic banks of Indian

River, breaking through its beautiful glen at his feet! The old Indian chief would have known all from his faithful runners! "He would have gleaned the story from the wild confessional of his uncouth devotees!" —thought Maxutoff, smoking unnumbered cigarettes as he gazed, troubled in mind, on the harbor now thronged with foreign trading ships.—"The secret of the island is buried with the old savage chief Thom, and guarded only by Orlof's pallid ghost! But these depredations are ominous! Thank Heavens! The *tribute* furs are safe here under our strong guard! *No villany can reach them!*"—

Alas! Gregory Maxutoff,—it is not *given to man* to read the *future!—nor even the crime-stained past!* The Governor General, looking toward the old Indian Chief's grave, never dreamed of how easily the wily old savage had lured Fedor Orlof, unsuspectingly, into the murderous hands of the tenants of that unknown whaleboat! He little dreamed that one keen-brained scoundrel knew the golden secret of the island, and as little dreamed that Serge Zubow's vast network of schemes was now closing in,—and that even an Emperor could be robbed of his official dues!——

"I will have earned the enjoyment of the happiest summer of my life when I rejoin my Beatrice, *after* I have given up forever the keys of American Empire here for the great Czar! My new dignity of Prince of Alaska will give me the highest recognition in Russia! *Then*, with skilled artisans, with men of science, with the active merchants of Moscow and Petersburg, I will open the mines of the green island. My task is then, after all, a simple one! To return *to the American capital* with my proofs of the *only private ownership of lands* here,—to duly register the grants there,—

and have them officially acknowledged! I can then leave the gathering of the golden harvest to my associates!"——

As courtly Maxutoff reclined in his furred chair of state he mentally arranged his closing labors! The visits, ceremonies of welcome and fitting reception of the American officials,—the arrangements for the departure of his family,—the settlement of the great Russian American Company's official ledger from 1799,—the turning over of all the ports,—the proper dispatch of the returning Russian subjects,—lastly, the dispatch in safety of the *two great cargoes of tribute furs*, the matchless spoil of years!— "*After* all is over, when I *know* that my dear ones and their guardian angel have safely reached Europe, by America;—I will post homeward, *over Siberia*, on the fastest of the Imperial special posts, to new honors, a grateful sovereign's reward and my *home* and *happiness*!—*There* will be the *crown* of my labors! *And the treasure island's future harvest will be safe!*"—The Governor General dreamed in his sleep of an Emperor's flattering notice and of this *rosy future!* There was no black shadow falling over the couch of state!—The days *of the prophets* are no more!

The week following the arrival of the American fleet was filled with those ceremonial festivities which marked the amity of the two great powers consummating the sale of a virgin empire for seven millions dollars in gold. Side by side, in the harbor, the Russian and American flags floated everywhere in a friendly rivalry.—Each day was noted for the arrival of steamer, sailing vessel or dispatch boat laden with American soldiers, adventurers, or eager merchants! A crowd of idlers soon overran the quaint old town.—The sorrowing Russians, looking back to the time of the

massacre, when the Archangel Gabriel was the *useless* patron saint, sadly mourned at this "going out" to far Russia, under the patronage of the *unpatriotic* Archangel Michael! The hills and harbor were unusually animated,—only a silence lingered where the great blue and white banner drooped still in pride over Baranoff Castle!—Beyond the glittering circle of the American officers bidden to a welcoming fête, in the grand old cedar panelled banquet hall, the frowning castle was terra incognita to the new comers!—*Only* the American Commander himself had been received at Prince Maxutoff's *family* board.—In the general rejoicing, and gathering in of these loud-voiced strangers, a few loyal unhappy hearts mourned on the bright afternoon of October 18th, 1867, when the whole Russian garrison was marshalled in state on the square of Sitka! The soldiers, citizens, and even the Indians, in gala garb, were assembled to hear the last orders read!—Prince Maxutoff, with a brilliant staff, gave the momentous signal, and, as the guns of the American squadron thundered out a national salute, the gallant Russian garrison, from shore batteries and castle, fired their *last salvo* in honor of their Czar, whose flag came *slowly fluttering down* forever from the great castle flagstaff!—It was done!

As the firing ceased, and the blue wreathed smoke drifted in through the castle's windows, wistful Princess Beatrice clasped the 'white Countess' in her arms, as she turned away and burst into tears!

"We are all *strangers*, now, Olga, in a *strange land!*" the gentle lady faltered, as the music of the "Star Spangled Banner" proudly floated up from the emerald bay! The American ensign was waving over them now!

"In a week we will be on our way to San Francisco, and *then*, homeward, to Europe!"—

The wife's heart was sad and her gentle bosom disturbed!—

"Have you decided on your *temporary* residence, Beatrice?" said Olga Orlof, with a marked interest in her tone.—

"*Yes!* Gregory thinks I had better abide *at Dresden*, —with his relatives, the Butzows, until his year of bureau work and settlements is done! Then, Irma's education can begin at once, as my husband wishes later to take a leave of absence for two years.—After that, retired and pensioned, he can travel abroad and will be free to follow up the development of island mine!"—

The princess smiled hopefully as she spoke, for the only return of the schemes of toilsome years had been, so far, poor Olga Orlof's *widowhood!* Gold at the price of blood! It was the *old* story!

"*And you?* Have you decided? Will you take up *again your artistic career?*"

"I will *abide near you*, near our darling, *Irma!*" cried the lovely widow. "I have some private matters which may call me away for a time! I can tell you, *now*, for I am a free woman, under the Stars and Stripes! I need *not* show myself to the gaping multitude for gold! —I have *always* kept my secret, but since my little Stephan will be forced to take up the burden of his rank, by and by,—I am glad that *my mother's estates* in Hungary, and *my father's* lands in South Russia, will make me independent.—for I will be free to go and come as I list,—and to avoid the painful scenes of the Russian capital! I have a substantial fortune—out of the reach of the Czar's strong hand!"——

"And you never told me *before?*" said Beatrice, reproachfully.

"I had no *need to*, but I have *now* passed into freedom, and I shall *at once*, with your noble husband's aid, register Count Stephan Orlof, the youngest Russian nobleman in Aliaska, and also avail myself of the facilities of the treaty to *register*, and return, at the government's expense, to Europe! I cleave to you also, for *these reasons*, that I wish Stephan, my fatherless boy, to finally have *my properties*, as well as the reversion of the Orlof lands! So my beloved 'Heart's ease,'—Olga and her little Stephan will go in your train and abide with you till this delightful spirited girl, Vera, who writes me so warmly, has concluded all the formalities of the proper registry of our hope, the *baby Count!*—As the Admiral kindly notifies me, she will come at once to me, for it might be awkward to have the meeting at Petersburg. And you can then be God-mother and witness for my baby! His legal papers must be perfected and registered in Russia!"—

"Ah! You are generous, dear one! You are trying to only blind me to the fidelity you have promised to my Irma! *Happy child!* with *two* loving mothers!"—And Beatrice Maxutoff went to her duties, and the cares of the preparations for travel, *happy at heart!*

"Gregory will *now* have *no* fear, *no* anxiety, while you are with me," was her last thought.

"I have not forgotten that! I never will forget all that I owe to your chivalrous husband!" smiled Olga.

That princely official, on the great square, was now marching arm-in-arm with the Commodore, a hero of our only battle day in Japan,—and preceding the cortege of fraternizing officers to the Castle, where he was fated to deliver up, at the last grand banquet, the keys of the

fortress and magazines to the American commander. There was only the reservation of his household, inclosed mansion and the sealed double warehouses, where faithful American sentinels now watched jointly with the last Russian guard!—

On the great platform, the guards of two nations saluted the answering commanders, and in fete and wassail, the élite of the friendly forces present were welcomed at the Last Feast of the Czar! For *Aliaska* was no more! It was now *Alaska!* The Crown of Great Britain, through mere diplomatic jealousy, had lost her finest national extension of empire in America!—

Besides the gallant wearers of epaulettes, stars, and medals, and the courtly sworded chevaliers, a score of civilian gentlemen of the two nations were gathered together, and, even the Archbishop in his purple robes of the priesthood of Aaron, with all his flashing diamonded regalia,—gave a solemn dignity to the last Muscovite state dinner!—

The music of the joined bands of the American and Russian vessels, waked the night with melodies of the lyric stage, the dreamy, delirious waltz, and deathless harmonies of the great composers, when the formality of the national airs had ceased!—

Beautiful Olga Orlof, walking the halls, felt her heart strangely thrilled, for the four years seemed to fade away! She was *again* on the scene! She saw once more the vast sea of faces, the fair women in gems and shimmering robes, the dazzling circle, the Imperial box with its bevy of attendant patrician beauties, the face of the dead Prince whose passion drove her to these lonely shores, and Fedor Orlof to his untimely death! *Again*, she was Marguerite, struggling to free herself from the clinging garlands thrown her by the delighted audience,

wild with frantic joy. The unreal scenes of the stage, recalled by memory, seemed *poor and thin*, to the real tragedies of her varied suffering! But, walking with fairy Irma, she forgot the days of sorrow, as the deathless music touched her heart of hearts! With a start, she woke from her revery, as the laughing child fled away toward the magnificence of the great banquet.—The Little Princess of Alaska claimed her *own* rights in her *own* land!——

"Irma, stay my child! Naughty rover!" she cried, in French, as her charge mischievously danced along.——

"Permit me! Madame, to restore to you a captive!" said a graceful looking youth of twenty, speaking to her in the polite idiom of the Gaul.

The merry girl looked at the dark, mobile face of the foreign gentleman.

"*I like you! You shall come and play with me,—like Uncle Fedor!*"——

With a bow, the white Countess acknowledged the friendly stranger's timely help.—At the door of the banquet, Arthur Randolph met the Commodore and the Prince, who were alone to confer on some future matters. They sought the seclusion of the inner mansion, for the guests were waxing jovial! "It was merry in hall, and the beards wagged all!"

"Do I go on board, Uncle?" said the youth.

"Ah! Arthur, *stay!*" cried the Commander. "Prince Maxutoff, allow me to present my nephew, Arthur Randolph, my guest on this voyage!"—

"A soldier?" kindly said the Prince, as he noted the chivalric bearing of the young man!

"No; *an artist!*" answered the old Commodore. "When my only brother was killed in the civil war, Arthur was sent abroad, and there, the galleries and

schools of Dresden have finally turned his head! He is only on a vacation run home."——

"Will you not join us?" courteously entreated the hospitable Prince.—

And, his artist soul touched by the apparition of the beautiful stranger, Arthur Randolph followed the great dignitaries into the quaintly luxurious drawing-room, where the ladies and the restored truant awaited them.—

While the Prince and the Commodore quietly arranged the closing masques of this strange meeting of *a despotism* and *a republic*,— in illogical amity, the ladies of the castle learned of all the later eddying of European fashionable life from the young pilgrim artist.—They found Arthur Randolph's boyish enthusiasm a graceful harbinger of their return to civilization. —His full brow, speaking eyes and flowing silken hair, the easy costume of the student traveller; and his bright word-sketches of the sparkling kaleidoscopic life of the continent, were the marks of a fairy Prince!—

For four long years, the stolid soldiers, skilled officers and obsequious subjects of the Czar had been their only entourage.—For the common sailors and rude vicious natives were mere human apes to the lonely women.—Both of them knew *too well* every thought of the careworn Governor, whose daily troubles were the only novelty since Fedor Orlof's ringing voice had stilled forever.—It was a welcome diversion! A foretaste of a re-entry into the continental life of Europe.—

With the pretty child at his side, Arthur Randolph told of the latest happenings in Europe,—of the golden loveliness of the matchless Empress Eugenie, the coming glories of the Paris Exposition, and all the small talk of the salon, the foyer and the studio!—He was a bright herald of the morning of polite Life soon to break in joy.——

"And what tempted *you* to the land of the Northern Lights?" gracefully asked Princess Beatrice.

"Ah! Your Highness! My *sketchbook* is filled with the wonders of this matchless gateway to the Arctic!—I joined my uncle for this purpose only, on his telegram to me at New York!—I must return, for my *first picture* goes to the Exhibition next year!—I had hoped to make the full round to Kodiak, but I will go down on the first dispatch steamer with the news of the transfer. I must return to my studio.—Art is a jealous mistress!" he smiled.—

"We shall meet, I hope, *in Dresden*, then!" said the white Countess, "for Princess Maxutoff, her child and myself leave as soon as we can get a Russian vessel. We will settle there!"—

"And you will paint *my* picture?" challenged dainty Irma.

"Ah!" said the artist wanderer, "if the *Countess Olga* would only permit me to essay *her* face,—it would ensure *my fortune!*" —

Years after, Arthur Randolph recalled Olga's sudden pallor, as she hastily said: "No! no! my friend! let this dainty spring blossom lead you onward and upward into fame! Not *my* sad features!"—

With ready bonhomie, Prince Maxutoff hailed the prospect of a Dresden meeting. Arthur knew well the stately Butzows, who were the stars of the brilliant Russian coterie. The pensioned diplomat was a local grandee.—

The Governor cordially said:

"You must be our frequent visitor here in the old hall till you sail.—I shall venture to charge *you* with a few *advance* commissions!"

Randolph, with boyish eagerness, gladly assented!

As they descended the stony stair, the marvellous beauty of Countess Olga Orlof haunted the young artist.—

"I *must* paint her!—'Mary of Scotland meeting Rizzio,'—'Paolo and Francesca,'—'A Venetian Night,' she robed as a Duchess,—this *innocent* Lucretia showering roses on a lover whose voice thrills the night, from a gondola drifting beneath her casement,—and *all* these visions of storied beauty thronged his brain, while the stout old Commodore watched uneasily his ships, with a sailor's practical ideas of squalls, currents and dragging anchors.—

The town was in a Walpurgis night festival!—Bonfires, surging groups of rioters of varied nationalities, Indian jugglers, fraternizing polyglot convicts, all rum-exhilarated, with here and there a few amused sober lookers on, of a higher grade.—

"I will make a few mental notes of this mad throng for character sketches, Uncle," said the romantic young artist, his fancy kindled by the bizarre sights of the gala night.—

"Well, I will go on board, but Arthur, I leave you *old Benson*, here, as a volunteer orderly.—See here! Boatswain! You will watch this madcap lad, and do not let him *go astray!*"

The old salt tugged at his cap.

"Ay, ay, sir! I know the landfall here! Been up here on the old '*St. Mary's*' twenty years ago."

And the satisfied Commander sought the stately repose of his cabin!—

"By Heaven! *I must paint the Countess!* I can wait,—for I wish the glow of light and happiness playing on her exquisite face." Arthur Randolph recked not of the lonely grave, where the wild rose petals drifted down, by far Indian River's cypress point.

"Hello! *Just the man!* Arthur, you are a Godsend to me here!" cried a man who had been idly watching the changing human medley. The speaker grasped Randolph's hand eagerly.

"Well, Bradford! You *are* a long distance from Bohemia! Do you open a daily newspaper office to-morrow? This is surely American enterprise,"—laughed Randolph, shaking hands.

"Hush! old fellow;—*I wish no one to know me here!* Walk down on the beach with me a moment."

The speaker was a man of thirty, his broad brow, neat moustache, quick eye, ready speech and air of adaptability spoke of journalism in every feature There was but one repellant feature in Paul Bradford's conventional bonhomie. He never looked his listener squarely in the eye! His smooth-shaven cheek, with its peculiar pallor,—spoke of the gambler's vigils.

In his laughing nonchalance, Bradford would say "My *cigars* are the choicest on the coast, I can not *afford* to drink! That folly is reserved for millionaires, crowned heads and *fools!*"

A restless, wicked, ready, relentless schemer, a man of a marvellous memory, and a photographic eye, Paul Bradford exhaled the intense mental activity of New York's newspaper row.—Cold-hearted, bright, suave, ingratiating, and ever watchful, his daily life was intrigue, his ruling passions, *women* and *cards!*—At the bottom of every Pacific coast intrigue of note, he was found as journalist, spy, go-between and adventurer!—

Dropping into San Francisco unheralded, he was known there soon as a man of expedients, resolute, and reasonably honest, *when well paid!* Not more than a half dozen times, the ugly word "blackmail" has been used, in naming him, *under a breath*,—for Paul Bradford,

not quite a gentleman, was keen enough to know when to fight, and was always armed! His San Francisco habit of being conspicuously seen with certain great bankers, operators, politicians and officials, gave him a local importance,—his own industry and unflagging mental activity did the rest.

Arthur Randolph had easily fallen in with Paul Bradford at the Occidental Hotel, over a practice game of billiards, in which Bradford's cool calculation was as marked, as in his all night poker games with judges, senators and the mushroom rising millionaires! But a dim suspicion of irregularity in his life made his friends wary of taking Paul Bradford to their homes. His conversation, elocution and unvaried politeness however won the hearts of the ladies he casually met!—

"How did you come up?" eagerly demanded Bradford.

The old man o' war's man eyed them closely, for he already had classed Paul as a suave gambler.

"*Looks too slick,*" the sailor growled.

"I am with my Uncle on the flagship," Arthur simply answered.

"By Jove, Arthur, I *must* get a pass to go up to Kodiak! Now, your Uncle will do anything for *you!* You can fix this for me! *It is vital to me!*"

"I am sorry, Bradford," slowly said the artist, "I am going down the coast in a few days.—Now, my Uncle is a stern disciplinarian, and has orders to allow *no journalist* on the fleet. I owe all my career to him. I could not honestly ask this of him! Anything else, but *not that!* I go on straight home to Dresden."—

Bradford held out his cigar case. The moon lit up the forest of masts, and the colored battle lanterns on the war ships gleamed brightly. From the fragrant

pines, the night-breeze swept down, and the waves broke gently at their feet.—

"I'll tell you *all*, Arthur! I have now the chance of a lifetime! I am nominally here for a great New York journal;—*it is not so* in fact!—Every banker, trader, miner, land shark and schemer in California wants a finger in this new Alaska deal! There are fisheries, fur interests, trading privileges, the seal islands, and a whole lot of rich plums here.—But the territory must be first organized.—The great ring at San Francisco comprises about twenty well-known powerful men. It is useless to run counter to them! They know what they want, and *when* to act! Their interests are always held safe! They buy up Senators and even *Secretaries!* Now, I came here for them on a special secret mission! I must reach Kodiak to meet a fellow there, who knows a *secret* of vast importance! He has been for years a Russian convict! He used to be a naval officer! His time expired this summer. But he is watched and *can not get away!* I can aid you to a slice of this future fortune! But I must get on to Kodiak! I must help this man away from his surroundings now!"—

Arthur Randolph hesitated, Bradford's innate insincerity, the cold heartlessness of his real nature, was potent at a glance to the refined young artist, whose generous soul shrank from all scheming! Paul Bradford mistook his hesitation for cunning! He decided at once on a bold stroke.—To place Arthur under the seal of friendly confidence!—

"Now, listen! This man is called '*French Pete!*' He has been a man of some rank. He drinks, like all men of varied fortunes. I have been selected to negotiate with him, for my backers know that I *never touch a drop!*"

Bradford's teeth flashed white as a wolf's in the moonlight.—

"You are my *last chance!* I have money, credit, full latitude! This fellow knows of the existence of an island of almost solid gold! It was discovered by a Russian, who is dead! Pete can not trust some powerful Russians he has been controlled by. *They would outwit him!* He dare not remain a Russian subject. The American military are soon going up to take possession! He is very poor.—If I can smuggle him down *to San Francisco,* I can keep him there till we get a title to the land, have him under control, and when *he* shows us the place, secure it, later! Now, can I see you in the morning?—*This is private!*"

Arthur Randolph was fain to yield and escape. The next morning Serge Zubow's "Nevsky" lay under the guns of the "Ossipee!"

CHAPTER VII.

PAUL BRADFORD OUTWITTED—THE EMPEROR'S FURS—A VOLUNTEER PURSER'S ASSISTANT—GOOD BYE SWEETHEART—IN TWO CAPITALS—THE PRINCESS OF ALASKA LEAVES HER REALM!

Before the sleepy denizens of Sitka had recovered from the Grand Fête of the Two Flags, the harbor was a scene of unwonted activity. A temporary United States customs official had noted the arrival of the Russian merchant ship "Nevsky," with its princely owner, Serge Zubow, on board, as well as the American whaler "Reindeer," which had put in for water, supplies, and also to land several sailors wounded in a matinee spent with a fighting "bowhead" whale.—In the stream, beside the American fleet, a stout Russian sailing ship and a heavy bark rode high on the still water! A crowd of half drunken natives were shovelling canoe loads of rock ballast in these vessels. Their gleaming copper showed high in air, for they were all empty! Besides the government archives and valuables, and the national property which a proud Emperor would not sell, the two most precious fur cargoes ever risked on the deep, awaited these staunch boats! The days of Prince Gregory Maxutoff's official power were at an end! No longer Governor, he was only by courtesy the representative in the new American domain of Alaska, of the distant Czar! He toiled at the lading of the fur ships, while his lovely consort, with her busy retinue, was dismantling the private mansion walled in the official castle. With great delicacy, the Commodore had estab-

lished his headquarters near the official wing, on shore, so as to prevent all prying intrusion.—

Arthur Randolph, sketch-book in hand, wandered over the pine-clad hills, or surrounded by the ladies, and ruled by laughing Irma,—the dainty princess of Alaska; transferred the wonderful Archipelago vista to his growing album! With furtive slyness, he watched the beautiful woman, now thoughtfully musing on the future, as she flitted along, a sweet apparition, on "Countess Olga's walk." She was sketched in every exquisite variation of her beauty, as she moved in sinuous grace along the gallery! Pretty Irma's face already gleamed from a small canvas, destined to cheer Prince Gregory in the long months of absence, while busied finally transferring the upper posts and islands, or traversing lonely Siberia!—Even on his return to Russia, he must spend a long winter alone at Petersburg, in his final accounting,—while his household gods reached Odessa, via the Cape of Good Hope.—

The last days rapidly ran along in varied activity. For at any moment, several steamers with heavy detachments of veteran United States soldiery were expected. They would follow on after Prince Maxutoff, receiving the different posts!—

The most anxious heart in Sitka was now that of the fair Countess Olga!—Under the personal escort of the Russian depot Colonel, she sat often by the wild, lonely spot where Fedor Orlof slept unforgotten. The bright-faced young artist, with sympathetic touch, transferred each glowing tint and tender shade, in a memorial picture. For, with his thoughtful delicacy, Gregory Maxutoff had arranged to send home on a later war vessel, which would convey the artillery of all the batteries to Russia, the remains of the murdered noble.—Olga knew

from Beatrice Maxutoff that not a trace of the mysterious whaleboat had ever been discovered.—Her woman heart shuddered at the unwelcome presence of Serge Zubow, but he was forced to limit his shore visits to the church establishment.—And even there the priests were now afraid of the sinister Tartar! Olga knew that Prince Gregory had sternly refused all personal intercourse, alleging the termination of his own official functions.—With quiet aversion, and secure in their height, the circle of Baranoff Castle waited patiently for Zubow's departure.—

The Governor General would have started in affright had he known of the dark designs of the keen scoundrel and his confederates, far and near. Wistful Olga Orlof, now busied with her sturdy little one, little dreamed that the whaleboat now, hanging, in plain sight, on the "Nevsky" had bounded over the surf of Admiralty Island with Orlof's red-handed escaping murderers!

But, nursing his rage and disappointment, the prying Paul Bradford *vainly* sought to ingratiate himself with the officers of the fleet! He was foiled at every turn. The marine guard on board sternly stopped every one, as the fleet was about to sail for the northern ports and islands. A positive written pass, from all persons not in the naval service, was demanded. And Paul, the sleuth-eyed veteran of many a dark intrigue, chafed at his inability to use Arthur Randolph's influence with the Commodore. "*It is useless*," finally replied the artist, "my uncle has told me that until all the property is transferred, and the Russian American Fur Company's property inventoried, no private person can go from ship to shore. Major-General Jefferson C. Davis will soon arrive and establish a system of coast police and passes. *Then*, you may call on him!"—

"But, Arthur, the man I seek *may be then gone!* He may wander away in his Gallic restlessness and be lost to me forever!"

Bradford was a stubborn tempter.—

"I will help you to a solid fortune! I must, I *will* reach this man!"—

"Paul!" said Randolph, firmly, "*I like you!* In the changing waves of life, you have been tossed on many shores! I admire your dash and endeavor! But I am not free to act!—I can not impose on my uncle's official responsibilities, even unwittingly! You must fight your way, under the northern lights *alone!*"—

While they talked, seated in one of the drinking booths the tall form of Mate Aleck McMann was seen, as he parted from Prince Serge Zubow, at the door. Zubow lifted his hat to the young artist whom he had met, sketching the picturesque interior of the quaint, dim, old church of St. Michaels.

"*Who is that?*" said Bradford eagerly.

"This gentleman, *Prince Zubow,* has a Russian trading ship in the harbor, of his own."

"Will you present me to *him?*" cried the journalist, eagerly.

"Certainly!" said Randolph, glad to be relieved of Paul's importunities.

He followed the tall Russian noble, who was moodily gazing at the fantastic curios and tawdry Indian wealth of the bazaars.

"Do you belong to the American whaler?" said Bradford, edging up to the raw-boned young mariner who stood at the bar.

"*That's my ship!*" answered McMann, eyeing the speaker keenly.

"Where do you go from here?" continued Bradford, offering a cognac in token of amity.

"We go up to Kodiak to get some native walrus hunters and ice pilots, and then make a last round to the edge of the ice after walrus and bowheads, after that down to San Francisco."

"I must go to Kodiak *at once.* Do you sail soon?" eagerly continued Bradford. "Money's no object! Will you take *me* up there?"

"What's your business?" frankly demanded the gray-eyed mate.

"I will explain in *private!* Do you know Kodiak?" The adventurer was eager.

"I may make this fellow hunt my wandering 'French Pete.'"

"I have been there every winter for fifteen years! I was landed there when the bloody pirate 'Shenandoah' burned our whalers after Lee surrendered."

"Where can I see you? *I'll put money in your pocket,*" whispered Bradford, as he saw Randolph and Prince Zubow returning.

"I'll send a boat ashore tonight at the landing! Just say you want to see *me,*—say, eight o'clock."

The sailor nodded and lounged out.

"Now what is this fellow nosing around for?" mused McMann. He is too sly! The agent of some San Francisco capitalist! I'll bleed him first, and then *fool* him!"——

"He is a Godsend to me, this mariner!" gleefully cried Bradford, as he joined at a signal, the handsome artist and the brawny Tartar Prince.

Serge Zubow welcomed the new acquaintance and offered to the young gentlemen the cabin hospitalities of the 'Nevsky." Bradford eagerly accepted, while Ran-

dolph, now devoted to the castle circle, gracefully excused himself from a dinner on Zubow's vessel.——

As the new made friends skimmed away in Zubow's waiting boat, Arthur Randolph heaved a sigh of relief.

"Paul seemed to have a good circle of club friends at 'the bay,'" mused the artist, as he climbed Kulalau's height, "yet I dislike his wily manners, his modulated self-repression! There's a bit of the *sneak* in him somewhere! And, what really brings him *here?* Some contemplated swindle on the United States Government! This great realm is a tempting bait now to every cool shark in the financial circles of the west!"——

While the afternoon breeze lazily moved the new flag on Baranoff's stronghold, Bradford over vodki, cigarettes and matchless Russian tea, deftly plied Prince Zubow with questions. He gleaned a general fund of Arctic gossip legends of the wild Tunguses and Gillaks, tales of the fierce Solievief, and stories of the western sweep of the Imperial yellow flag of conquest, with its black double eagles crimsoned in the blood of the affrighted natives. But, cunning of fence as he was, Bradford could not fathom Zubow's purposes, his destination or real functions.

"I have interests from Nova Zembla to Corea, and from Icy Cape to the Yenesei and Lena! Siberia is a great frozen treasure house of gems, fossil, ivory, gold and minerals! Timber, fisheries, furs and millions of acres of arable land are there! The smile of the Siberian summer, woos a dainty luxuriance of harvest to life! And it is from *its* mystic forests that the great wave of Tartar conquest swept to Pekin, to India, and to the far Caspian! The hoofs of the wild horses of Genghis Khan trampled the bravest Asiatic and European bosoms. The spirit of wild bravery thrills in our very breezes,

sweeping from the unconquered altar of the Polar Ice King, whose gleaming colors stream in the northern lights."——

Bradford was rebuffed, as Zubow politely declined to take him farther north and land him on the Aleutian Islands.

"My cruise depends on varied circumstances," he laughed, and, as Bradford was rowed away, the Prince cast a sinister glance at the "circumstances!"—The two great fur ships now laden to the gunwale with the tribute torn from the suffering Eskimo, and debauched Aleuts!

In all the transfer of "eminent domain," the plunder of the helpless natives was *not* to be interrupted! It was but a change from *one* master, to *many*! But the fur ships, with their slender crews, unarmed, and only protected by the dignity of the Czar's name.—

Zubow laughed: "I would like to see this fool Maxutoff's face, when he is asked to account, *next year*, for these millions in glossy skins!—We cannot fail! For Phillippi, Fersen and myself have fenced the field in, and our concealed employes will do our bidding."

Far different to the great roomy "Nevsky" was the housed "Reindeer," its deck littered with coal, trypots, whaling gear, spare boats, and trading goods.—Rows of barrels filled with vile *trading whisky* were ready for its final barter with the natives, already slaves to King Rum!—

In the little ill-furnished cabin, crowded with arms and gear, Aleck McMann fenced politely with his guest over brandy and cigars. It was an hour before Bradford thought that the invisible spirit of wine had thoroughly warmed McMann's heart. The grey-eyed sailor lay back like a basking shark, waiting for Bradford's ultimate proposals.—

Finally, he *directly* approached McMann!—"What will you charge me to land *me* at Kodiak?"

There was a moment of silence.

"I can *take* you up there, but I dare not *land* you!" said the sailor. "The Commodore orders us to take a guard of two marines on board to see that no one leaves the ship! I do not know *what* they fear! And I might not be able to put you ashore, for we stand off shore on our cruise."——

"Will you take a letter for me and find a man there, and give him some money and supplies for me?" Bradford had grown anxious. His last chance was slipping away now.

"What's the *nature* of the business? Smuggling? I can take no risk for my ship!" The sailor was wary of fence.

"I can not explain the affair,—but I will pay you well to find my man!"——

"*Who is he?*" said the simple looking sailor, as he refilled the glasses.

"He is an ex-convict, slowly said Bradford, "his name is 'French Pete,' or otherwise Pierre Lefranc. He used to be a Russian naval officer.—I wish to find him."

The bottle in McMann's hand never quivered, but his heart was filled with rage.

"The scoundrel has betrayed me! This fellow too has the *secret!*—Why do you not *wait* and meet him *here?*" the sailor carelessly asked.

"There will be ships going up with troops soon! He is afraid to show himself in Kodiak," earnestly said Bradford.

"There are some old Russian *enmities!*—He wants to

quietly escape! Once in San Francisco, I can *protect him!*—But I must reach him at once!"

The yellow gleam of Aleck McMann's deadly eye was unnoticed.

"*I* will reach him first, *you fool!*" he thought as his hand closed on the heavy sheath knife which he wore, as well as a fully loaded revolver.

"Where is he? I don't want to get my ship in trouble. If I could bring him off, what would you *pay?*"

McMann faced Bradford with a glance of sullen inquiry.

"Five thousand dollars coin!" answered Paul, bringing his fist down on the table. "I will deposit the money with your agent, if you wish to see it. He is hiding with the Indians on Cheligoff Island. The Indians at Karlouk Point know him. All he wants to do is to get away from some old Russian entanglements.'

"Has he committed any crime?" stolidly said McMann,—"I suppose he has killed *some Indians!*"

"Oh! no!" answered Paul, "I only want him brought away from there."

"He *shall* be!" mused McMann, "and *I'll* keep him *far* away, too! I will trap this traitor! If I did not need him, I'd *sink* him with a kedge anchor strapped to his feet! The scent grows hot! I must warn *Zubow!* Shall I run him off? But to *catch* him first!—

"What will you give to communicate with *him?* That's as far as I feel safe! You see I might get my *ship* in trouble!" simply remarked the sailor, pulling at his cigar.

"If you'll run in and signal the Karlouk Indians and get safely to him a sealed letter from me, I will give you one thousand dollars!" urged Bradford.

The mate considered for a few moments:

"The coast is *dangerous* and it takes some time! Make it *two* thousand, and *I'll do it!* I'll send the letter which he sends back, down by *our relief ship* which comes here when we take on her stores there!"

"*Done!* I will meet you to-morrow and the money will be ready!"

"Have it ready at noon, and meet we at the Narwhal Saloon!"

"*All right!*" the overjoyed journalist answered.

"I have done a neat stroke of business to-night,"—ruminated Bradford, as he waved his hand, while the departing boat's oars were showering diamond sparkles in the still night air.—

"Now *you* are *caught!* My fancy speculator spy! I will see your 'French Pete,' and—I'll hold him—where *we* want him, until we are ready to descend upon *his* gold island! How shall I keep him? Under lock and key? *Ah! I see!*" with a chuckled laugh over a bright thought, McMann took a night cap, and turned in!

"It will take a *couple of years* to hide the whole thing till we get a title. As soon as the land office is opened here *we* will grasp the whole territory! But I must *wake up* Zubow! He dreams now only of his fur capture. I must get at work quickly!—The two fur ships are ready to sail now, and Zubow will be after them!"—

Alexander McMann, smuggler, desperado, murderer and pirate, slept the sleep of the proverbially righteous, for the doom of 'French Pete' was already sealed!

"Yes,—that's the idea! *A solitary confinement!* The San Francisco house can fix it!" These were his last night thoughts!—

The old Commodore was bristling with annoyance, as he said adieu to the anxious Princess Maxutoff, a week later.

"I am terribly harrassed," he growled to the ex-Governor General. "Have *you* had such annoyances, Prince? Here I am besieged by all kinds of adventurers of every nationality asking for passes, permits to go north, to land at the stations, to go to the Prybiloff Islands,—to establish trading posts,—to do everything in the world."

"Ah! *we Russians* do not allow our inferiors to annoy us! They are *subjects*, not *sovereigns!*"

"Confound the place! I am glad to be rid of it!" vociferated the Commodore, "The army transport will be here next week. Now, Arthur," said the old officer, "I just had to *positively refuse* your friend Bradford the right to land at Kodiak! You can tell him he can apply afterward to the transport steamer."

"Madame la Princesse!" said the courtly old sailor, "I will only keep your husband as my guest a week! I will run my flagship at full speed and formally receive the different posts. leaving an officer to turn the stations over to the army when they arrive. So it will only be 'au revoir!'—I am in haste to return to San Francisco myself. If you desire aught, Arthur will have the fleet officer attend to your slightest wish!"—

The "Ossipee" soon left the harbor, with a ringing salute, in honor of the princely guest, while handsome Arthur Randolph felt a new dignity, as Knight-in-charge of the old Castle Perilous!—Sketching, walking the gallery with his dainty friend and patroness, Countess Olga, and some charming Russian lessons from pretty Irma, were the artist's diversions in the ten days of absence.—

"Duischka! Duischka!, — Darling!" this was the extent of Arthur's gleanings in his Muscovite tuition.

With moody brow, Paul Bradford avoided the youth,

"I have *one* iron now well in the fire!" he rejoiced, as the "Reindeer" stood to sea, two days after the flag ship left.

"I wish the Commodore to be away when I land, then I shall have no trouble about your man 'French Pete!'" said McMann, as he jingled Bradford's gold.

"Trust *me!* You will hear by the transport!"

"Fool!" sneered the whaler, as Bradford waved adieu,—"The fox has trapped *himself* this time!"

For over their cups, Prince Zubow and the mate laughed at Bradford's clumsiness.

"Do not forget, McMann, you can have any help you want from our secret partners in San Francisco. Hold on to the French fool! We will use him *later*, when our system is established. But keep him hidden and above all *silent!*"—

"Now," mused Serge Zubow, as he saw the "Reindeer's" snowy sails fade away, "I have, at last, a clear field!—Maxutoff is away, and these people at the castle will shun my footsteps! Now, to perfect my arrangements with the magnates of the two fur ships! If the devil fights for his own, the Emperor shall never see a single skin of these priceless bales! Maxutoff's title of Prince of Alaska will never be gazetted! The scheme will net us two millions, for there will be no Arctic furs in the European market for two more years! In innocent hands, distributed in England, Germany and Holland, the goods cannot be traced!"——

He was walking the deck of his trim boat, and, as the blue smoke of his regalia floated away, he saw the fluttering robes of the ladies, on their guarded gallery.

"Curse that weak-hearted fool, Maxutoff! He balked me of *you, baby-faced song-bird!*—But I drank a sweet revenge! She will rue in silent poverty the day she

scorned my offers! Could I try a trap for her, *here, now!*"—

He gloated over Olga's thrilling beauty.

"No!" he growled, "the stake is *too* great! Fresh *beauties* may be found; but I must keep out of sight! Maxutoff's ruin will give to me and our silent circle, the actual control of *both sides* of the Arctic! His child, as Princess of Alaska, would be a menace to us! She shall *not* be! Even *Olga's* bright eyes are not worth that plan's miscarriage! Gregory Maxutoff will be trapped! *Doomed!* The crash will come when his lips are sealed! And he will *test the climate* of the Neva casements! By Heaven! If I could only *see* him in the dungeon! The convict's friend may then remember our quarrel!"——

"*Now*, for the directions to the fur ship's officers!"

The sound of nightly feasting kept up till long after the transport, loaded with soldiers, left to garrison the northern posts. Ending at Kodiak, and returning by the seal islands, the boat would soon bring back the scattered temporary naval agents.——

"I am to leave you soon, Prince," said the artist, when Zubow sought slyly for news of the Governor General's return.

He had his traitors all drilled in their posts.

"The transport will take me to San Francisco."

"And your *friend*, Bradford?" queried Zubow.

"Oh! *He* went up to Kodiak, as purser's volunteer assistant," replied Arthur.

"Ah! *He never should have left here alive!*—This is really dangerous!"—the Tartar mused.

Prince Serge Zubow was not the only observer in Sitka who marvelled to see the aristocratic Paul Bradford join the working crew of the old "California," as

purser's assistant. To a chance San Francisco acquaintance, the journalist laughingly remarked: "The transport is crowded and I may say I have *worked* myself into the best stateroom on the ship, save the Captain's!" For with six companies of artillery on board, even the officers slept on dining saloon cushions. Those devoted heroines known as the "ladies of the army," were occupants of the of the narrow staterooms. —wives and mothers of uncomplaining heroes, often the young girls who married into the "old army," earned the "imperishable crown" several times before being fitted for that shadowy adornment. As long as brass buttons glitter, and gold lace gleams, the man in "regimentals" leaves the sober-minded "cit" far in the rear! It may be that the "bank account" of the plain civilian has its merit in *later* and *cooler* days, but the sword is often wreathed with the orange blossoms of youth!——

Paul Bradford, pencil and notebook in hand, duly checked freight and aided his genial master, an old friend, who calmly said: "*Don't worry, Paul!*" when Bradford, at Sitka, explained his dilemma.

"I will make a *working man* of you! I will enter you on the ship's papers, and all the Generals and Colonels in the world shall not keep you from landing at Kodiak!

The adventurer purposely ignored the officers of the army, lest a careless word might betray him,—for his excited mind was fixed on the control of Pierre Lefranc's secret. Bradford knew not that drink, fear of Prince Zubow, and remorse due to shattered nerves had made "French Pete" a wreck on Error's shore.

The convict saw the close intimacy of McMann and the Tartar Prince, in the long winter.

"If I told *them all*," he muttered, in commune with

his hopes, "they would *butcher me,* when they had the secret: as—as—we killed Orlof!"—

For Fedor's pallid ghost haunted Lefranc's pillow, even as the avenging shade of Stephan had broken the guardsman's dreams on the Amur!

Awful price of human blood!—of unpunished murder! —When unpaid, for years, it is paid *the most,*—in the bitter vigils of the *guilty!* For bed of down, bolts and bars, guards,—nay,—nor clinging white arms, can not shut out the unsubstantial ghost of the murdered which *will not down!*——

There are thousands of Macbeths who never reached a crown by guilt, who meet an awful Banquo, in mystic samite, at every turn!—The martial shade which stalked at *Elsinore* has, alas, countless prototypes! It would seem as if the earth reeked with the blood of unavenged innocence! But who may follow the awful web of the mystic fates?——

So, Bradford knew not of the impending wreck of Lefranc's mind, nor the real reason of his refuge among the Karlouk Indians! At any alarm, in his swift baidare, he could hide on the safest of a dozen moss-covered islands! For *now,* the murderer feared that either Serge Zubow might kill him, or wily McMann outwit him!—

"No! only at San Francisco, when I have *gold, a hoard of gold,* will I give up my secrets!"

For old Shaman Thom, now dead, had imparted to Pierre Lefranc alone, the whole story of the island treasure! The simple natives fancied that the gold grew in the gullies of the high green rock, and only every three to five years did the yellow treasures blossom to harvest!——

The "California" sped away, lightly laden, as the

freight for Forts Tongass and Wrangell was left behind at Sitka, their garrisons were following to take charge by *another* steamer! Bradford, at any other time, would have revelled in the unique beauties of the Archipelago of Sitka! The autumn colors of the thousand islets gleamed in emerald, gold and burning crimson, shaded down to the sea shell's dainty pink! Under the shadows of the tall green pines, troops of lithe, gray deer herded, cleaving their watery path, when startled to other mossy haunts. The balsam breath of the pines, the fragrant fir, and crisp birch, scented the cool air as the steamer plowed its way through the deep channel clefts, dashing rippling waves over the lonely shores! Mount Edgecumbe's silent crater hung far above him, snow-mantled, as its lava-channeled sides towered in the blue-vaulted air.—It was an enchanting dream, but Paul Bradford saw *nothing* but that distant, fog-hidden gold island! The majestic sculpture of the Fairweather range in silvery turrets and faint drawn minarets flushed by them,—and the steel-brown rusty hills lowered darkly to the East! A land of lonely seas and wildest shores! The unbroken silence of the Arctic seemed wafted from the blue skies, wherein Polaris gleamed on high, a warning lamp, and the northern lights glittered around the Sea of Ice which locks the secret of the frozen Pole!——

Through floating, sharp-fanged ice cakes, into great Glacier Bay, the bearers of the new banner voyaged, a quaintly carved mass of nature's dainty imagery in living turquoise blue, fading into the coal-green of the salt sea waves.——

In silent parade, cramped between its huge mountain-flanking boundaries, the King of Glaciers unrolled its matchless panorama!—Hundreds of feet in height, the

Aladdin's palace of glittering purest ice took on every gleaming color of an artist's palette, and shaped in its calm distant reaches, every dainty fancy of a poet's brain.——

The thundering artillery of falling citadels of thousands of tons of ice resounded in a distant roar, while affrighted waves fled far to sea in tremor! It was the giant's playground, a green and glittering ice field, the emerald heights took on tints of gold and rose, as the Arctic sun sank far in the gray waste of the wild Behring Sea! The castled crags of Drachenfels, in sculptured outline, waked the noblest lyric of Byron's tortured heart, but the poet of the Muir glacier must be a future crystallization of the exquisitely throbbing mother-heart of Nature! That Fairy Prince comes not yet! His master hand has never waked the chords of nature's wild wind-swept harp!——

At night Dome Peak, Tako Inlet and Admiralty Island,—loomed to the east darkly, while the rushing paddle wheels beat their way against a stiff sea toward the great bend of Alaska. Paul Bradford, watching the distant lights of Indian encampments, wondered in what one of these gloomy fiords the unreaped gold deposits lay. "But I shall *know* in a day or more!" he cried, as he threw his cigar away and saw the hissing spark whirled in the sea. "And 'French Pete' shall *never* leave my eye till I have secured the legal land entry to cover the gold fields!"——

In the darkness of the night Bradford unconsciously passed the hidden treasures which had baffled fifty seekers for a *century!* Sweeping through Prince William's Sound, the stout steamer sped along, aided by the current, toward Kodiak Island. In the gray of a chilly morning Paul Bradford, with a beating heart, saw

Kodiak and Afognak rising, mountain buttressed in the air, with the flashing rivers tumbling down into indented bays! In sight, Aliaska peninsula led out to the Aleutian Islands, fencing in the lonely sea of Beavers. As the fog lifted, the steamer exchanged signals with the heavy-sparred "Ossipee" on her outward track to the Prybiloffs.——

"Thank Heaven!" cried Bradford, as he hastened his preparations to land. "I will find this man soon! If the 'Reindeer' has not arrived I will get him smuggled *back* in this boat!"——

In an hour the anchor rattled down in Chiniatskoy Bay, and in a stout cutter the purser's assistant dashed away toward Karlouk! For the natives, swarming around in their skin canoes, had informed the purser that the "Reindeer" had sailed the day before.

"I am *safe*, at any rate!" mused Bradford, watching the leg-of-mutton sail, drawing every thread under a stiff breeze.—His pockets were filled with ready gold! A good revolver and several jugs of rum were his supporters in his dealings with the Chief of the Karlouks. Bradford had caught up all the threads of information, and a Kodiak native in the cutter was the pilot. Two hours later, drenched with spray, the gold seeker entered the squalid hut of driftwood, banked with mud, of the Karlouk Chief! Two or three crones, hovering over a fire, watched a mass of broiling fish, and in a circle of seal-skin clad, greasy natives Paul found Oo-ni-mak, the wily Eskimo who had long sheltered Pierre Lefranc,—now known to trade and whaler as "French Pete"!—The corner of the hut was filled with walrus spears, whaling gear, implements of fishing and trapping and bales of skins. The shaven Eskimo grunted in joy as Bradford broached a jug of "open sesame" rum.——

The sight of gold, already known as the token of purchasing power, brought the natives around in a crowd. To the native pilot, a good interpreter, Bradford confided his request to be led to "French Pete." The Kodiak native, a harpooner, had picked his English up on several whaling and hunting cruises. After an excited dialogue with the Eskimo, the native turned a blank face to Bradford.

"Gone! *Carried away by the 'Reindeer!'* McMann, Big Aleck took him!"

"*When?*" shouted Bradford.

"Three days ago!—He was *carried on* board this whaler!"

"Was the man *sick?*" queried the journalist spy.

"No! He did not *want* to go, and they carried him *tied* to the boat, and then took him away!"—

Bradford was now excited:

"Was there *foul play?*"

He feared to betray his anxiety to the cunning old Aleut Chief, Escaping from the fearfully vile interior, Bradford led the interpreter up and down the beach. He then, *after a half-hour's powwow,* distributed the rest of his liquid largesse, and threw his tired limbs on a tarpaulin in the boat.

It was four o'clock next morning, when the disappointed man sullenly rewarded his boat's crew! He had left the native pilot to verify the old Chief's astonishing story! It appeared that a violent quarrel *of some kind* had followed an interview of McMann with "French Pete," who had been drinking heavily. When the burly mate had seen Lefranc read the letter, which the old Chief had seen delivered, he endeavored to *draw* "French Pete" out of the hut with him! A long colloquy followed, which was ended by McMann summon-

ing his armed boat's crew. The native described, in dumb show, how the Russian ex-convict had been *bound* and carried off, yelling for help, to the boat, by the sailors from the "Reindeer."—And this water sprite then filled her sails and stood out toward the straits and the whaling ground.—

"I suppose the mystery will be solved when I get McMann's letters at Sitka, by the "Ossipee," so ruminated the wondering Bohemian. He learned that Oo-ni-mak had sent a native down to Kodiak, with a letter *prepared by McMann*, while his crew guarded Lefranc in the boat at the native's little cove harbor. Bradford knew the Arctic courtesy of letter carrying, and pondered on the possible explanation.—

The next night, when the "California" quickly discharged by the soldiery, glad to be on terra firma, fired her gun and turned her prow toward Sitka, Paul Bradford was as far from the mystery of the golden island as *at San Francisco!*

"Thank Heavens! We do not run out to the Prybiloff's!" he ejaculated, when he learned that a schooner would take the temporary military guard over to the fur seal islands.—

Bradford's unrest haunted him on the three days' return voyage. The final report of his pilot interpreter left no doubt that "French Pete" had really been dragged away against his will, by McMann.

"Did he need *medical assistance?* Was there some hidden danger?"

But his heart sank within him, as the interpreter expressed a rude surprise at the quarrel:

"They no fight before, not in *one,—two,—three years!*" the native kept up confirmatory fingers.

"But perhaps McMann did not *recognize* him, under the name I gave!"

Bradford was puzzed, for the natives insisted that McMann and the Frenchman were *formerly* good friends!

When the "California" glided into Sitka Strait, three great square-rigged vessels were seen *standing out to sea!* In company, the fur-laden packets of the Czar were sailing westwardly, flying the Muscovite transport flag, and the "Nevsky," *lighter and swifter,* had swept far ahead, in the sweep of the Japanese current! Her checkered sides marked the whaler and trader with the old imitation gun ports. There was nothing left in Sitka Harbor, but some small vessels and the three United States war vessels.

"Paul, do you go *down with us?* Will you still be purser's clerk, or did you *make your fortune* at Kodiak?" bantered the general steamer official, as the friends gave up their brandy and soda, with euchre accompaniment, at the port.

"I'll tell you, *in ten minutes,* after I get a letter here! I expect news!" said Paul, as they sped away to the shore.

At the temporary office of the Admiral's fleet secretary, the purser received stringent orders to reserve all the cabins on the downward trip for Prince Maxutoff's family.—

"*Aristocratic passengers!*" cried the Purser.

"Well, *do you go!*" he continued, as Bradford perused a heavy document handed him by Arthur Randolph, who said, "This came down marked 'Special,' on the 'Ossipee,' and was given me by my uncle as it is also marked '*Immediate,*' I sought you out."

Both the Purser and Randolph marveled as, with brief thanks, Paul Bradford threw himself down at a table and called for a glass of brandy. It was unusual! He was as white as the paper he held! The two men left him.

"Bradford seems *sick!*" said the jolly Purser. "He has not been *the same man* since we left Kodiak!"

Arthur Randolph hastened away, for he was to be the fortunate escort to San Francisco of the two Russian ladies and his now devoted pupil, the little Princess Irma. In the old house, at once grogshop, store, and temporary customs headquarters, Paul Bradford blankly gazed at the letter, whose useless voyage to Kodiak had cost *two thousand dollars!* It fell out of McMann's great clumsy envelope, and its appearance showed that it had been tampered with and closed by a dirty thumb.—The vague character of the mate's letter made Bradford start with impotent rage.—

"I return *your* letter! 'French Pete' *is not* at Kodiak! He left Karlouk several weeks ago, and may be on some other whaler! I return the paper *intact!* The old Chief Oo-ni-mak saw him sail away!"

A few *detailed lies* served to fill the sheet over the villain's signature *at the foot!*—

"*Hound and liar!* I have been tricked! But *who* seeks the Golden Island? This scoundrel, McMann, has surely spirited the Frenchman away! I have been fighting *an unseen foe!* Now, for a forlorn hope! To wait at San Francisco, board the returning whaler and *take the Frenchman off* on her landing! *But on what pretext?*"

In sullen, baffled rage, Paul Bradford gathered up his belongings on shore to report to his secret backers at San Francisco. He mused

"Perhaps McMann can be bought to *betray* his employers! Has Lefranc been carried away to be landed on the Siberian shore *in a perpetual bondage?* There is some *unseen* influence *here!*" and the shadow of defeat sat on Paul Bradford's brows, as he boarded the steamer.

—"The French Consul believed that the story and samples of gold quartz and dust were genuine! Who is *behind* McMann? I must watch that Company's *whaling headquarters*, for the island *shall* be found!"—

While the decks of the "California" were crowded with a departing motley throng, the main saloon was sacred to the Commodore and several of his ranking officers. For already, the ladies' cabin was filled by the Maxutoff party, save only the wistful Princess Beatrice. —Countess Olga Orlof was the especial object of the Commodore's care, and Arthur Randolph was eagerly explaining the proposed voyage to his inseparable companion, the dashing little Princess Irma!

"And you will teach me to *draw and paint! Truly!*" the bright eyed student asked.

"This winter. Yes!—*At Dresden!* You shall be my first lady pupil,—and *my model*, for a young *angel!*" fondly said Randolph.

The warning whistles, bells and signals, were recalling all stragglers and announcing the transport's sailing. The gallant Commodore wondered at Countess Olga's unreserved coldness to the compliments of the impressionable officers of rank. She was standing anxiously watching the great portal of Baranoff Castle. For though all the baggage and servants were now on board, —though even that prince of aristocratic Sitkan children, the infantile *Stephan Orlof*, was the charge of his watchful attendant, in the great saloon stateroom, Prince and Princess Maxutoff had lingered alone in the dismantled halls of the old castle! They lingered behind to say adieu clasped heart to heart, once more,— before a separation of long weary months! For vast responsibilities and tedious bureau affairs would hold Prince Maxutoff at St. Petersburg until after he had de-

livered up the Czar's last keys of American Empire! His work was not all done, till he had returned the rich tribute of the frozen north, settled the complicated affairs of the old Russian American Company and rendered up to the Privy Council his powers and *secret archives!* The husband started as they heard the signal warning whistles! *For the last time,* Beatrice Maxutoff gazed from her favorite window, where for years she had gazed out in her yearning for the far away Russian home! *Happy Russia!* Tears started to the lovely ladies eyes as she bade the exquisite panorama a last farewell in a lingering glance! Turning, she was clasped in her husband's arms in a passionate parting, and by the flickering ashes of their hearthstone, soon to be cold forever, —they thought of the happy past, the honors, the comforts, the semi-regal state of their years *under the northern lights,* reflecting the glory of the splendid Russian crown!—

"Beatrice! Remember my *heart* is with you, in *your* bosom! And Irma, *darling Irma,* whom I shall not see, until I have won for her the title of *the first Princess of Alaska!* Think always of me! *I am with you in heart and soul!* And, *now,* darling, *one last embrace,*—here in the quaint old castle home! For you must be *brave at the last!* My own Beatrice!"—

With graceful dignity, the lady Princess bowed, but she smiled through *tears,* veiling her drooping lashes, as the American sentinel "turned out the Guard," when Maxutoff led his charming wife over the threshold *for the very last time! The last Time!* There is a thrill of a mysterious heart tumult in the very words: *The Last Time!* Parted lovers, friends estranged, loving watchers at the bed of pain, those who meet and part on the great Sea of Life, hear the sad words, '*The Last Time!*'

as a knell rung by the cruel Fates! Bright, brave-hearted Beatrice Maxutoff, leaned upon her princely husband's arm as the breeze blew back her rich dark tresses.

"*I* will guard Irma, my darling" she hopefully replied.

"May God guard *you*, and *all we love*, in this year of separation!"

"*And my Gregory!*" She pressed his arm with loving grasp.

"Though parted, you go to *new* honors! To bring me *your laurels* where I will wait, under the roses of the Elbe valley! Think of our own *little one*,—the dainty Snow Princess,—*Irma, of Alaska!*"—

"Dear old Dresden! Our happy future waits us there! A nation's honor! An Emperor's gratitude! The welcome of the stately Empress who guarded my youth! Shall I forget the day she gave me the mark of the Golden Chiffre, at the Catherine Institute! Your fidelity and wisdom have assured Irma's future! In our later years, *we will look back together* to this happy, romantic, quaint, old Baranoff,—*our loving and beloved old prison* mansion!"

And she kissed him fondly, with trembling lips of love!——

An hour later, Gregory Maxutoff watched the "California" turn behind the cliffs! *The parting was achieved!*

"To my work!" he thought, with a sigh, and he little recked that *in two capitals*, shrewd scoundrels, in high places, worked at the plotting of his ruin!—

CHAPTER VIII.

A SILENT YANKEE—THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S DEPARTURE — OMINOUS TIDINGS—ANTON PHILLIPPI'S MISSION — AT DRESDEN—VERA ORLOF'S SURPRISE—"I AM YOUR FRIEND FOR LIFE—FOR OLGA'S SAKE."

Countess Olga Orlof, leaning on the steamer's rail looked again the Olga Darine of her happiest days, as the wooing winds swept the clustering golden curls from her exquisite face. Though the lone grave by the rose-scented copse of flashing Indian River lingered in her mind, she felt a strange new joy of motherhood thrilling her bosom.

"I am bearing little Stephan, born in innocence, the child of Love, back to the land where he shall live to honor the princely name of *my husband*,—of *Fedor Orlof*, the unhappy, loving, loyal man, whose life was given up for me!"

For in the duplicate patent of the great gold fields, now secured in joint ownership to Maxutoff and his heirs, and to Countess Olga Orlof and her descendants, she knew she carried the glittering prize for which luckless Fedor was slain! The little Princess of Alaska in the dim future could shield and guard her baby playfellow!

The old Shaman treachery, Pierre Lefranc's greed and betrayal, Serge Zubow's brutal double revenge,—all these led up to the murder on the "high bare green island," where the dull golden grains lay, under the foot now of only the wild beast, and guarded by the screaming sea birds!—

"Stephan! my Stephan! has come unto his own! Perhaps, on some great field, he may yet lead his father's squadrons, under the Imperial eye, to a rose red victory whose golden glory shall wipe out the old, old stain!"

And with this second devotion of her life, Countess Olga cheered Princess Maxutoff, whose womanly fortitude lessened with every sweep of the surge bearing her farther from her dead husband! For the mother and the Alaskan Princess had seen their silent realm for the last time!

The two ladies were much alone, save for the bright companionship of Arthur Randolph, who was responsible for the safety of madcap Irma. Paul Bradford had not failed, before reaching San Francisco, to endeavor to ingratiate himself with the gentle voyagers! But in vain, he could not reach the charmed circle of confidence. Princess Beatrice shunned him, for his suspicious intimacy with the morose Tartar, Serge Zubow, was known to her.

"I can not trust *any friend* of that dark villain!" the anxious wife said. "My only cloud upon these happy changes, to be, is that Serge Zubow is *still* in the North Pacific! He has money, friends and the strange support of Count Fersen. All this bodes no good to Gregory!" And yet, in the unaccustomed bustle of a great city, Beatrice Maxutoff's heart lightened, her spirits rose, for the first news she gained was that a Russian war vessel had already been detached to convey her husband to the mouth of the Amur. On its frozen bed, he would dart away, in the night and day express of the Imperial Courier's swift sleigh! The wondering eyes of the ladies of Baranoff were fixed on New York's marvels of kaleidoscopic life, a month later, before Prince Gregory had received the farewell oration of the denizens of Sitka! Their journeying to Europe was a daily round of the quickening impulses of a recivilization!

It was with an anxious heart that Maxutoff prepared for his own departure.—He might not hope to know before it, of the embarkation on the Atlantic of his precious hostages to fortune. His first news of the nesting of his wanderers at Dresden would be from old Excellence Butzow,

who could telegraph in the Imperial cipher to far Irkutsk! It was on a chilly December night that the "Rurik" lost the lights of Sitka from view and, in the howling of the rising storm, Prince Gregory sought his care-haunted couch, on the high seas. Not even 'the Emperor's health' given by cheery Captain Linieff, roused him from the fatigue of his last six months, and the grinding trials of his high station.—For, in the last week, while Linieff ran to Behring Straits and picked up the last Russian officers, the Prince was busied in his deserted home, pondering over a mass of important despatches from the Privy Council, which had only reached him through the hands of Captain Linieff, who had received them officially from the Russian Consul at San Francisco. They contained the last directions of the Home Government, countersigned by that wily Imperial Delegate Count Fersen, now at St. Petersburg. It was true that the whole population of Sitka had given him parting salvos of cheers. That the complicated affairs of the Czar were all now honorably adjusted, that the United States officers gave him a superb banquet at the castle, in adieu, and that the thundering cannon wished them all a noisy "God speed!"—

For the safety of the enormously valuable fur tribute cargoes had been a source of great past anxiety! In the wild storm of the night, Gregory Maxutoff shuddered at the thought of nearly two millions of dollars, in furs alone, exposed to the risks of the sea. True, the Russian Crown's laws and dignity provided for no insurance. The high seas were swept now by no hostile sail.—But a vague presentiment seized Maxutoff as he closed his eyes in the wild gale. "If they *should be lost*, the fur ships, I would be forever a ruined,—a *disgraced* man! As they drove on toward the mouth of the Amur, Maxutoff examined the last dispatches received too late for effective action. By hazard his eyes rested upon the postmarks of the final

unopened envelope. He tore it open and, in the splendid cabin which he shared with the Captain, turned to Linieff with a groan!——

"*My God! Linieff, I am ruined!*" he cried. His face wore the pallor of death.

"What has happened?" cried the loyal sailor, forcing a draught of cognac upon him.

"There has been *foul work* somewhere! Here is a *positive order of council* for me to *hold* the fur ships until the arrival of a special corvette as convoy,—that I must officer *each* of them with selected *naval officers* from the war vessel sent, and a guard of twenty sailors and mariners, with four cannon on each, should be sent as a protection from the artful Malay pirates! *Upon no account* should I send them forth otherwise! And an implicit obedience ordered *at my peril! See!* These dispatches have been *delayed two months* on the road,—moreover, in Fersen's own hand is written: '*Following the detailed orders given to you by me at Sitka.*'"

"It is unfortunate!" murmured Linieff, aghast at the possible consequences.

"Linieff, I am ruined! *Fersen never gave me any such orders!* And these dispatches have been surely withheld for some sinister purpose! They reached San Francisco *in time* for me to have acted. *Who are my enemies!*"

"I cannot tell! Let us hope that nothing will happen to the cargoes. But I believe Count Fersen and Serge Zubow both bear you ill will. Each of them, in San Francisco, was often accompanied by a silent Yankee with an inscrutable face,—a middle-aged man,—Eben Tomlinson by name! Now, Count Fersen was also inseparable from this man on his visit. I have found out that *he* sold Serge Zubow the "*Nevsky*," and they met at Victoria. You have told me of Fersen's previously prepared proxy to Zubow, and the Russian Consul completed this peculiar friendly

association! I have heard it rumored that Fersen and Zubow would try to control the *Siberian* fur trade and the seal island, and that this Tomlinson aimed at a great association licensed by the *American* Congress.—Now, your disgrace, by the withholding of these dispatches, could be effected *only by the Consul!*"

"Zubow certainly *hates* you, and I have always felt that he had a hand in poor Orlof's murder! From Serge Zubow and Anton Phillippi's past deeds in Khamschatka I know they would not even stop at murder to carry their plans,—and Phillippi arrived before I sailed,—from Japan and China, on his way to Washington to confer with the Russian Minister! This Eben Tomlinson has also been Phillippi's American agent for years. They *might* have bribed the Consul to withhold your dispatches, if Fersen could have *warned* them! But for *what purpose?*"

"To make some furtive attempt on the fur cargoes! *I see it all!* Zubow swore my ruin over the Orlof quarrel! And his 'Nevsky' has followed the two fur ships *to sea!* —I am helpless!"

In far San Francisco, as the "Rurik" breasted the Ochotsk gales, over a sumptuous table in the sacred domain of the Russian Consulate, Tomlinson and Phillippi eagerly communed, as the officials, with sleepy eyes, watched them in satisfaction.

"Well! Did Zubow get all his men *on board* the two ships? Have you heard?" said Phillippi, with a wicked gleam in his eyes.——

"Yes!" briefly replied the Yankee. "I gathered up most of the men at Victoria, and sent them up on the 'Nevsky'! Zubow's letter by the troop ship tells me that one captain (a greedy Finn) is safe to be depended on to land *one* cargo in Victoria! Mixed with the exports from there, the furs can *never* be traced!"——

"Good!" cried Phillippi. "And the *other?*"

"The other Serge Zubow himself will *fight* for! He will reach the Kurile Islands *first!* And the navigator of the largest ship will pass into the strait where the 'Nevsky' waits!"

"And——" Phillippi was jubilant with expectation.

"Well, you may hear of an *outrage by the wild Kurile Islanders,* that's all!"—smiled Tomlinson, leaning back to enjoy his cigar.

"How Zubow hates that fool, Maxutoff!" Phillippi mused. "He will risk his very life to *ruin* him!"

"Ah! you don't know the *real* reason! It is all about that princess prima donna, or *prima donna princess,*—up there at Baranoff! They quarreled to the death, and *this* is Zubow's revenge! He has sworn Maxutoff's ruin!"——

"Well! We can trust Serge! But, Tomlinson, you must get *your* lease and government contracts as *soon* as you can!" answered Phillippi, "for Fersen and our party will be in full control by *next year!*—Then we will be the *Kings of the North Pacific,* when we join forces. How do your matters progress?" Phillippi was gravely attentive.

"We have had a desperate struggle to get the matter into the *right hands* at Washington! We may be a year later, but no one but *our own circle* can reach it! You can leave me your full directions at Washington with——" he leaned and whispered a name.

Phillippi smiled as he drank a brimming toast. "Here goes to our joint company! *For Serge is true!* We will make the Emperor pay *himself* for bribing his councillors to grant us *our* monopoly! Maxutoff will *never* reach the coveted dignity of Prince of Alaska! The tribute ships shall both be ours. You must do your part!"

Captain Linieff, out at sea, pacing the quarter deck of the "Rurik" vainly tried to console Prince Maxutoff. As they communed over the future of Siberia and the domin-

ion of the North Pacific, the ex-Governor unfolded his heart to his loyal friend.

"You know there is *much* to make my home coming the occasion of popular clamor. The strange Russians, even in repression, are intensely patriotic. Our flag yet has never lost a square mile of conquered ground. This sale is looked at with general disfavor, and *I* will be made the scapegoat of any misfortune. I have closed up the Russian-American Company's unprofitable affairs. On the whole, there has been a very *great* loss! When Bassoff, in 1745, brought back his matchless treasure of the second trip, in the richest consignment of furs the world had ever seen, the days of the Russian *fur craze*, as mad as the *South Sea Bubble* fever, began! When *common sailors* brought home *twenty* years average gains, as the result of a four months trip, the popular excitement passed all bounds!—

"*Now*, beyond the gold paid for Alaska, the greatest revenue of fifty years is this imperial tribute, endangered while afloat!—The *gold* will fall forgotten into the coffers of the Empire, the *losses* of the Trading Company will be remembered, and the *sale* of our great American domain will be deplored! Seward is far smarter than Gortschakoff! Now, if any accident to the ships should happen, I would be ruined—*ruined!* And, *at a distance*, *my hands tied*, my enemies may have laid snares! Not for myself, do I fear, but for *my brave wife,—my darling Irma!*"

"Prince Gregory, do not give up so to your idle fears!" cried hearty Linieff.

"See here! Our publicists will look at the other side! *Some day*, the English will build a railroad to the Pacific! The Yankees are doing it *now!* It is almost finished! They, with their fleet could destroy our coast settlements if we had kept that trans-Pacific realm! With their Canadian railroad, they would be invincible on that side. Our

real point to guard the future supplies for great Siberia, will be easily effected by our friendship with the Americans! We laid them under grave obligations in their civil war! They *must* help us in a future war with England, with privateers, which will shelter in their western ports and other help! Yankee *greed* will do the work! They will repeat the tactics of the English traders in the mad civil war just ended."—

"But I am *sorry* to see the great realm go to strangers! It will easily return a hundred millions of *profit* to the Americans in fifty years. We could not keep it! I was in Behring Sea, when the old transformed Sea King, the Shenandoah,' of the Confederate States, ran into the 'Arctic!' The great Yankee whaling fleet, chasing the 'bowhead,' were in the wake of their daring ocean pathfinders!"

"Think of the Ganges in 1835, finding the real cruising ground of the valuable whale, and then stumbling into Kodiak! The Hercules and James followed in 1843, and after the watery trail through Behring Strait was discovered, the stern captain of the 'Saratoga' pushed *alone* up to 71° 40' North, in 1851! A simple mariner, reaching the highest point near the pole and shaming the costly discovery fleets! What men, these Yankees on their dollar hunting! *Nothing* appals them! If they could unite on a wiser policy than that chimera of equality, which will *wreck them yet*,—they would rule North and South America!"—

"You do not believe in republics?" smiled Maxutoff.

"No!" stoutly answered Linieff,—"Russia is *strong*, with all its defects of code, because a hereditary crown gives a *continuous* policy! Germany is *formidable* by the ceaseless military energy of the Hohenzollerns! England's *never ceasing* game of acquisition and extension is handed down by every wearer of the crown! In America, the nerve activity, surface education and theoretical equality

makes *every tinker* dream of the Presidency! I have travelled among these strange people!

"The *heart* of a democracy may be open to equity, the *head* of the people very often goes astray! France is *diffuse* and *vacillating* under the republic, where as *many* talk as work! But the dash, the hardy bravery of these Americans, their self-dependence is wonderful! We never really explored the great river Yukon, that huge icy artery of Alaska! But a single American steamboat captain took the little steamer "Wilder" this year, up the unknown stream *twelve hundred* miles.—I saw him at the mouth of the Yukon. A resolute fellow, his name, E. E. Smith! He showed a dozen times the fortitude *alone*, with *no other man* to advise, than the hugely overrated Columbus in his easy drift over the Atlantic! For every mile of this terrific journey was beset with dangers *almost* insurmountable! Fear, fatigue, obstacles, nothing daunts the hardy pushing American!"—

"It is in such daring feats they shine! When they drop into *trading* they become as petty as a Greek! But their boldness! Their originality! It was in June, 1865, even after their war was really over that the Confederate Waddell made his desperate diversion in that famous Corsair run around the world! For he destroyed thirty vessels, worth two million dollars, with an old armed *merchant steamer!* What a sight! I will *never* forget it! He fired the only guns ever discharged in war in the Arctic Ocean, when he sank, burned and destroyed *ten whalers*, in one day, with their rich cargoes! So strange, that the flag of the rebel States should wave *in triumph* under the northern lights, on the 28th of June, two months after the great war was over, and the mighty Lee had gone to his home, in the heart-break of defeat! And the cunning pirate knew the war was over!"——

"Who but a *wild American* would have raced to the

Arctic Ocean to *make war?* It was little credit to the Yankee government fleet that he ran her around the world, later in safety, to distant Liverpool. You can see from *this*, how the splendid English fleet would have ravaged any explored communities we had on that lonely shore! It was wise, the sale, after all!"

"What a romance clings around the North Pacific!" mused Maxutoff, as he gazed toward the Siberian shore, now but a day distant. "We have left the spot where *autocracy* and *democracy* have peacefully met, in circling the world! Which will last the longer, in the future storms to come? The prophetic policy of that wonderful genius, Peter the Great, or the resultant republican effort of the patriots of America? The world has never yet done justice to great *Peter*, mad with the great power of an unparalleled brain power!—He impressed the Russian character indelibly! He *alone* is the rock on which we are builded! And the force of his character has certainly never been equalled! Violent, an Alexander in the field and in his cups, he was self-taught, a law unto himself, and a mechanic, law-giver, statesman, general, Czar! The modern world has never known his equal! The magnificent Corsican, the highest embodiment of intellectual power, the *culminating* human mind of his century died in defeat and despair, at St. Helena, his plans crushed out by the mere dead weight of aroused Europe! But *Peter's policy* blossoms anew in the laurels of each succeeding Czar! East, west, and south, the tramp of our Russian legions moves steadily on. We *threaten* Europe, *dominate* Asia, and when Constantinople has *been won* and a lodgment made on the *Persian Gulf*, what then remains for the Romanoffs?"

Maxutoff spoke with a pride which thrilled Linieff!

"But one sacred duty to mark the close of the century remains to supplement Peter's policy, to extend it, to add to its grasping vigor? *And that is*,"—said the Governor

General!—"It is the great railroad to the Corean boundary on the Pacific, with its telegraphs! Then, in magnificently compact strength, Russia can gaze at England holding the seas in thrall by her dauntless fleets! For the frontier of China, the gates of India, the plains of Persia, and even Asia Minor will be menaced by the greatest Empire of the Twentieth Century! Our Holy Russia, its Baltic, Black Sea and Pacific ports impregnable, it will be impregnable in one huge continuous realm, and great Siberia, thrown open as a thoroughfare of the world, will develop its wondrous riches! The Asiatic trade will all be *ours!* Peter, grand, wonderful *giant among kings!*—To your prophetic policy, the steamboat, the railway, the telegraph, have only added to the power of the Aladdin's lamp you willed to your heirs!"

"It is right to draw in on the Asian shore lines! We will rule the great mother continent of the world! Even Catherine I., the doubtful daughter of a strolling Swede, the pauper orphan, a common soldier's wife, General Bauer's minion, Princess Menschikoff's servant, the plaything of Peter's passion, caught from his very enthusiasm, the spirit which, when she wore the imperial diadem he gave her, made her plant his victorious eagles in the Pacific! To the erratic child of this fantastic union, the pleasure-loving Elizabeth Petrovma, she left the sacred injunction to hoist the double-headed eagle where you have hauled it down saluted by the guns of a republic, then *undreamed of*, till she had lain for twelve long years in the tomb!"

"The weird fancy of the wildest romance, pales before the incredible story of Catherine's elevation from drudge to Empress,—before the simple woman's arts which made *a cast-off menial adventuress*, the wearer of Russia's ruby crown,—the obscure plot, which, after Peter had slain his son Alexei,—and Peter II. had been removed by small-

pox,—caused an army surgeon and a French ambassador to sweep away the infant Ivan's baby fingers clutching the sceptre!"

"It brought Elizabeth, Catherine and Peter's daughter, successively to the throne, though with gloomy vindictiveness, he had decreed that each ruler should *name a successor!*"——

"It is the wildest tale of history!" mused Maxutoff. "What guides the affairs of the poor human spawn who crawl upon this earth!"

"The gifts of fortune were lavished upon Catherine I. as upon no other woman who had ever lived! Mary Queen of Scots, born to the Realm of Scotland, a prospective heiress *by marriage*, of the throne of France, *by law* of that of England, died broken-hearted in defeat, upon the block! The beautiful, stately head was bowed in shame, white with the snows of sorrow, to fall under the vulgar headsman's stroke!"——

"Mistress of all arts, of diplomatic games, the matchless star of beauty and of grace, her blood flowed at the nod of a queenly rival, and her dynasty disappeared in hereditary misfortunes! The sceptre was forever banished from Holyrood, where the dainty beauty roused the chivalric Scots to a pathetic loyalty! The spider builds to-day in her love-haunted palaces!"—

"But this child of chance, dragged up into the fiercest light of Peter's throne, *Catherine I.*, left the tremendous gift of Fortune's Secret to the girl she bore to Peter, and their line sways to-day, the destinies of the dwellers from the Pole to the Caspian, from the *Pacific* to the *Baltic!* You have seen me the trustee of the huge estate which the awful fates gave to Russia, at the mandate of Peter's daughter, through Behring and Tchirikoff.—In a century, *who will be the masters there?* In *five* centuries, *will there be* a *Russia*, an *America?* Blind slaves of Fortune are we all!

what can the seer *foretell*, which the fool may not *forestall?*——

"And in a hundred and fifty years of trial, Peter's policy is, after all, the *only successful one* in European statecraft! The madman's wisdom has withstood even the assault of the grim Fates!"—

"Maxutoff shivered in apprehension, as he thought of his own devious life path, stretching far away to the Neva!

"What awaits me in the dim unknown future?"

The stars did *not* answer him! And was it *in mercy* they were silent? The doom of Fate hangs in awful silence over all!

It was on a raw wintry day that the stout corvette "Rurik" made the lights on Cape Djaorè and Cape Prongè. The straits of Tartary were filled with floating ice, and the winter storm howled madly, rolling along huge breakers in the shallow channels.—

Prince Maxutoff, eager to meet his old friend, General Dachkof, and push on to St. Petersburg, felt that it was his very salvation to speed on, and to *counteract* the cabal headed by Count Fersen.

"I would not attempt to land any man *but you*, Prince," cried gallant Linieff, as he gave orders to launch the strong steam launch, while the heavy war vessel rode sullenly along at quarter speed on the dark surge. "You will have a rough fifty mile trip to Nikolaevsk,—but we Russians *fear nothing*,—when *the Czar* bids us face the road!"—

Tears stood in Maxutoff's eyes when he grasped Linieff's hands, in adieu. Scant ceremony was there for the parting,—as the Governor must trust to a sling noose to reach the launch, wildly pitching, as she was dragged along in tow—!

"*God bless you*, Gregory! Trust to *your Emperor* to reward you! You will forget these cares and fears in the

golden circle of the Winter Palace. Tell General Dachkof I'll stand off and on till I can bring the 'Rurik' over the bar and safe into the river delta. *Then*, I can receive his orders! Don't fail to greet your delightful consort and *the fairy Princess!* I *envy* you your happy future!"——

Away over the heaving waste of waters, the heavy launch sped, bravely buffeting the icy waves pouring over her whaleback! Captain Linieff turned his ship out to the open sea for safety, even though the rolling seas made the strong war vessel quiver in every timber.

"If the Governor has no orders, I will run out beyond the Kuriles, until the storm spends itself."

Fifty miles out in the growing dusk of the evening, the deck officer reported the Saghalin guardboat signalling for 'closer communication!'—Linieff sprang to the quarter deck, signal book in hand, and in a few moments, the keen-eyed midshipman had noted the full message, though the parti-colored flags streamed wildly in the howling gale. A strange presentiment chilled the sailor's heart, as he read the transcribed message:

"Russian vessel from Sitka, bound home, totally wrecked, on Yeterop Island of the Kuriles,—south point. Go to assistance of crew. Met junk in La Perouse Strait steering for Dui for help. *We* cannot land at Nikolaevsk!" —

"My God! I hope it is *not* Maxutoff's fur ship!" groaned Linieff, as he dictated a brief message ordering his launch picked up, on its return, and a brief report to General Dachkof telling why he had stood out to the Kuriles! Then with a heavy heart, the Captain ordered *full speed* and bade his navigator shape the course for La Perouse Straits!—

"Alas! Poor Gregory! If it is the wreck *I fear*, he will hear the news *soon enough* at Petersburg."——

And so out into the howling storm, the "Rurik" sped, while Prince Gregory forgot his haunting cares in General Dachkof's royal welcome. With the habitual caution of a

diplomat, made doubly timorous by his fears, Prince Maxutoff warily listened to General Dachkof and held back all reference to the brief, sweet and tragical love episode of the Orlofs. At noon of the next day the wild Tartar horses reared and plunged in the great furred sleigh. In the boxes beneath, every comfort for the road was stored, and the steel blue lance heads of a dozen Cossacks gleamed viciously, as the escort reined up their ponies. Revolver, carbine and sabre, with double ammunition pouches, made these men able to cope with the wild Mantchurians emerging from the gloomy Chinese banks of the Amur.

With a chorus of wild yells, Maxutoff was whirled away, waving his turban to gallant Dachkof, who had drained the stirrup cup '*to the Czar*'—and then shattered the glass! Seven thousand versts in a wild snow wilderness, haunted by wolves and the ferocious famished tigers of Mongolia,—gloomy wastes infested with desperate convicts, wild Khirgis and escaped criminals, lay between the traveler and the gracious Emperor, whose reward awaited him! He had passed Khabarofka, when the Saghalin guard boat took up the launch, and sent on Captain Linieff's dispatch to headquarters.—

General Dachkof fretted as he read the message from the mouth of the Amur.

"Bad Luck! I need the 'Rurik'—*at once!* And I could have sent this important news on by the post sleigh, with Maxutoff. *All seems to go wrong!*——

But it was worst of all for the anxious Prince, who was now madly dashing along through the savage valley where Khabarof, in 1651, with a hundred and fifty volunteers held the Amur gorges against the wild archer descendants of bloody Ghenghis Khan. The whole path to Irkutsk, on the diamond jewel water of Asia, great Lake Baikal, was haunted with memories of Cossack bravery, of Cossack loyalty and Cossack craft! Away, past the spot where the

Tungus tribes yielded to the Czar's horsemen in 1639, Maxutoff passed through the scenes of the struggle with Khirghis and Mongolian, which for one hundred and sixty years made the mystic river, a vale of bloody encounter.

But Peter's will conquered *even here!* The Little Khirghis, in 1731, ceased to lift the lance in war, in 1781, the Central Khirghiz followed, and only in *1847* did the great Khirghiz Horde, the last ferocious sons of Genghis, yield to the prophetic mandate of that Iron Czar, now sleeping peacefully in the white marble tomb on the Neva!——

"Whence comes the Russian loyalty, from *love* or from the *lash?*" thought Maxutoff. "Is it pride in the onward march of the yellow flag with its black eagles?"

Ivan, the Terrible, brought the hosts of Yedigee to their knees in 1555, the great Stroganoff and Demidoff families pushed over the Urals, Ivan IV grasped the Kama River, and the Stroganoffs, with the wild Don Cossacks, drove Kuchum's vast army south in China! The unlettered Cossacks, building Tobolsk in 1587,—returning the compliment of a Tartar invasion,—grasped Siberia and marched to the Pacific, for Attassof, in 1697, had brought even the silent land of *ice* and *volcanoes*, mystic Khamschatka, under the Iron Czar's rule!—

"Nothing withstands the Cossack!" mused Maxutoff. Leaving their own *treeless* plains, their wild riders became boatmen, woodsmen, fishers, sailors, hunters,—and even baffled the wily Mongolians in wit! The vagaries of overloaded technical scientific explorers seem poor and paltry before the deeds of Buza, Stadukhin and the daring Deshniew. These men conquered without maps the virgin icy desert of North Siberia! They threaded the awful frozen wastes where the mammoth and elephant, the beasts and reptiles of a prehistoric age, lie still gripped in the blue crystal coffin of ice unmelted for six thousand years! There, in an eternity of Death, they lie among the flowers and fronded palms,

the giant foliage which once nodded at the congealed Siberian rivers!

Is there any magic like the hidden chemistry of nature? Imagination can not paint a history with as many *unturned* leaves, with the print of the Creator fresh in *fadeless* colors, as that of the atomy speck, hurled through space, which we mortals call the world!—

The three great Cossack explorers builded *ships*, with rude self-taught art, and conquered the Lena, the Yana and the Kolyma! The bones of bold Buza are long crumbled to ashes! The wild Cossack died long before Lefort, the forgotten Genevese, taught Peter the Great the arts of civilization and lit the flame of the fierce mental ambitions of the Russian Czar, which, dating from 1682, blazes even brighter to-day!

To the great Lefort, *his teacher*, to the genius of Natalia Narychkine, his patrician mother, Peter the Great owed his mental elevation! *Nothing* came to him from Czar Alexei Michailovitch but the right to reach out his boyish hand, for the *bloodiest crown on earth!* His *own* headlong mental courage, his imperious soul, made him at once father, creator, builder, and prophet of his barbarous land! To Peter, was given the right to make the Russian Bear's growl echo *around the world!* He caught up the secrets of the three roving Cossacks. He followed Buza, in mind, —in his desperate voyage, eastwardly—down the *Lena* to the *Yana!* The bold adventurer was "the first who ever burst into that silent sea,"—lapping the towering icebergs drifted from the mystic Pole! Stadukhin carried the Cossack pennant on from the Yana to the *Kolyma* and builded there, an outpost *city!* Last of all, Deshniew, with intrepid heart, gathered his fleet of seven vessels, a phantasmal creation, and burst headlong from the Arctic into the Pacific! The first northern discoverer!—

The oblivion of two hundred years covers the name of

Deshniew. Nordenskiold succeeded to Behring's *doubtful* honors when he arrived at Yokohama in later years, in 1879, having at last achieved the northeast passage! For twenty-five years, the Cossacks in their frail barks essayed it, but Deshniew at last burst the seal of the silent ages, and *found Khamschatka!* The Russian Eagle was planted there forever!——

"What does *not* Russia owe to the strange clan of the Cossack!" Maxutoff exclaimed. "A race *unknown* till the tenth century,—the very incarnation of military heroism, —they are now the brightest jewel of the Russian crown! For to the Cossacks Buza, Stadukhin, Deshniew, Khabarof, and Attassof, the white Czar owes *to-day*, a land two and a half times *as large as European Russia*, and *twenty-five times larger than Germany!* The Czarevitch is proud to gratefully accept the title of Ataman of the Don Cossacks!—

The Stroganoffs and Demidoffs followed up these wild men and the gems, mines and riches of the Trans-Ural were soon theirs! When by Patrick Gordon's sword and Lefort's counsel, Peter finally seized the crown from his half sister, the Regent Sophia, he followed the track of the immortal five robbers with the imperial finger! When his *whole family* had at last bowed to his commanding genius, Peter then reached out across the sea for the New World! The *Czar* was tutored by the *Cossack!* Two hundred years later, De Long, bearing the star flag of America, miserably *perished* where the hardy Cossacks survived and calmly began a search for new worlds, at the mouth of the Lena! The lessons of these resolute Cossacks are monitors to a faint-hearted later world, and shame the pinchbeck explorers of our effete century!—

Back from the scenes where Behring and Tchirikoff carried Peter's immortal mandates over the stormy ocean, Maxutoff sped away over the endless winter plains of Siberia! Day after day, in his ceaseless onward career, he

traversed the national line of the coming railway, a *wild dream* to him then, but whose construction is the opening triumph of the Twentieth Century!——

When Alexander III, on March 17, 1891, devoted by Imperial rescript four hundred millions of dollars to build *a four thousand miles railroad* to the Pacific, the august spirit of Peter's undying genius thrilled in the very nerves which guided the pen!—The world itself will be a debtor to the five great Cossacks!—Human oblivion is but the mental eclipse of fools! The stars shine behind the cloud! And in the Walhalla of the world's great explorers the five Cossack chiefs are seated *among the greatest!*

The mad, fantastic irony of fate which divorced a wife of the noble Lapoukin blood, named by his haughty mother,—the cabals which shut up his sisters in convents, —the dark fate which sacrificed his son Alexei,—all these, led to the succession of that wonderful child of fortune, Catherine, and handed down the crown to the fruit of their ill-stained union, Elizabeth!———

The wily paramour who outwitted the Turks and saved defeated Peter, had the lofty spirit of sympathy and fidelity, and to her and her child, with their brave servants, Behring and Tchirikoff, Russia owes to-day the commanding position she holds in the world. What ghastly memories of crime, of intrigue, what faded dreams of pomp and vanished power cling around the row of marble tombs on the island of the Neva! And *yet, to-day,*—Peter's electric spirit twinkles on every Russian bayonet! Let him who sneers at *woman* marvel that his *adventuress wife* and *minion daughter* carried the eagles of conquest farther east than even the Iron Czar!—Heart of fire,—a magnificent plaything of fortune, Peter's strangely met consort was unique!——

General Dachkof fretted as he daily watched the signal tower at Nikolaevsk and saw the grip of the winter king on

the lower Amur. A month and a half had elapsed since Captain Linieff put out in the howling storm to search the Kurile Islands for the shipwrecked Russians. The General's brow was dark, for complaints had reached him of the starving natives of Khamschatka and the *absence* of Prince Serge Zubow,—Count Fersen's delegated marshal of the north!——

"*Confound him!*" growled the veteran. "He is always absent!—Roving over the North Pacific on his self-constituted fleet, the '*Nevsky*' and that great lumbering brig '*Kodiak!*'" Dark stories had even reached the kind-hearted General of Zubow's rapacity,—his cruelty, his garnered fur magazines, his illicit trade in rum,—and the mysterious voyages of his unlicensed ships! "*What can I do?*" mourned the Governor General of Eastern Siberia! "*My* power ends at Cape Lopatka, and I have *my own* future to guard! If I complained Count Fersen would baffle me! He seems to be playing at Damon and Pythias with this brute Tartar! I would only have two enemies *the more!* Ah! Russia!—land of *fear* and *dissimulation!* The spy lurks in the very anteroom of the palace, at the glittering mess, in the salons, where the white-bosomed beauties flash dangerous secrets with a wave of the fan, or a gleam from lustrous eyes! Soldiers, servants, friends, strangers, even the beggars, the clouds of police and hordes of officials,—*all* are one great network of timorous, dangerous, rascally spies!"——

At last the long suspense was broken! The Saghalin guard boat brought a dispatch from Captain Linieff at Yokohama! It had been forwarded up the splendid Empress road of Niphon from the Russian Ambassador at Tokio. Linieff had found only the *battered ribs* of a large Russian ship! She had been stripped and entirely dismantled by the thievish Kurile Islanders eager to obtain her fastenings and use her material for junk building.——

The closing lines were full of sad portent for the princely traveler now speeding on between Irkutsk and Tobolsk!

For Gregory Maxutoff, dreaming little that black care followed him fast, was well over the huge Yenesei and pushing on quickly toward the Obi!—These gigantic water arteries of Siberia, their huge rivers draining alluvial wastes replete with gems and seamed with gold, are of vast immensity! Maxutoff's wildest flight of fancy little dreamed that *thirty years later*, three barges with fifteen hundred tons of steel rails would be towed from Europe *around North Cape* into the very heart of Siberia by the Yenesei! The dreams of Cossack Buza are more than realized!

The silent Lena, three thousand miles in length, flows to the delta where the American polar expedition starved, in a sheet *six miles wide*, a hundred miles from De Long's grave! What future magic of commerce, when a new world's highway is opened! When the iron horse follows the tracks of the bold Cossacks of the fifteenth century! Man, *of all the animals, alone* superior to change of habitat and essential condition, will probe the farthest antres of the Siberian wastes for *that magic gold* which Maxutoff dreamed of in its island treasury, as he sped on happy-hearted!——

He dreamed, too, of the dear faces around the samovar at Dresden, for *even now*, Princess Beatrice, the siren-voiced Olga and laughing Irma, were bringing the romance of Baranoff Castle into the Butzow mansion!

Alas! While he dreamed, hardy old General Dachkof groaned as he threw down Linieff's dispatch! The very last clauses told him of a *great disaster!*

"I fear," wrote Linieff, "that the lost ship was *the large fur transport!* The lying natives told me a vessel had taken off the crew!—But of *what nationality*, I know not! Whatever plunder these rude thieves obtained was secreted. I am now under the orders of the admiral to wait here *a month* and then convoy the spring fleet north to the Amur!

I fear that this mishap will bring about a *serious future trouble* to Prince Gregory!"——

"The *fortunes* of war! The *chances* of peace!" said Dachkof. "We stumble along *blindest* when our senses are relaxed in the brief sunny glimpses of prosperity!"

And the soldier sadly addressed himself to the unvarying drudgery of his great office.—"*I need a ship sorely!* If Serge Zubow were only available!" But he was fain to grumble in vain, for native canoes coasting around the Ochotsk brought him news that the wilfull Prince was *far away* on a long cruise.—"Then, the Starosts and village chiefs will be *in wild riot* until the spring inspections!" Dachkof was heartsick.——

The February snows lay glistening around the fair city of the Saxons where the charming Elbe valley smiles around the Florence of Germany. The afternoon sun sparkling on the tower of the Frauenkirche, a glittering vision in crystal tracery, shone down upon Dresden, beloved of the æsthetic Teuton. The staid burghers, home-loving and prosperous, gazed with pride at the votaries of art, the pilgrims of many lands streaming in to the magic portals of the great gallery! Lean-faced, ferret-eyed Yankee, rapt Italian, impassive Briton, turbaned Turk and ardent Gaul, in knots and groups, paused before the matchless, wistful tenderness of the Sistine Madonna, the liquid coloring of Coreggio, or the sensuous witchery of Titian's glowing visions of beauty.—From patrician to plebian, calm, critical age to the kindling eye of youth, the varied sentient types of mankind passed in review, a motley procession drinking in the poetic impress of the mighty giants of art. The fifteen hundred canvases on the walls of the Gallery are a glorious triumph of time! The delicate "visions flitting impalpably" before the chastened eye of the rapt creative artist live *here* to lead upward in the deathless allegories of Truth and Beauty! The turret

bells chiming musically, the crested heights whereon no hostile batteries now mocked God's truce of human brotherhood, the brooding peace, were all elements of the flow of civilization, in the beautiful landscape, the gentle atmosphere of homely German enthusiasm and all that speaks of the world's renaissance.

Before a wondrous "Venetian Lady," Arthur Randolph, with youth's fire lighting his brow, sat and toiled in the renewed intensity of the artist fever which devours, while seeking, expression. Passing dilettantes cast a glance at the growing similitude of the copy, but their eyes soon wandered to the graceful group gathered *at the artist's side.* Princess Maxutoff, her fair face clouded with gently repressed anxiety, fixed her kindly eyes upon the youth intent upon his task. Restraining the eagerness of Irma, Olga Orlof gazed upon the world, *in petto,* passing in review! It was a dream fabric, an awakening, the return of life to her brooding heart, so long pent up with the unvarying routine of the Alaskan eyrie on Kalatan's rock! She little recked that the passing stranger found her delicate face, with its marvellous eyes, a *lovelier theme* than the passive beauties "*on the line!*" The simplicity of her robes, her nameless air of distinction, the seal of nature's finest nobility, the romantic combination of her golden hair shading the matchless eyes, the Venus pose of her moulded form, caused the eyes of youth and gallant to glow with the unconscious tribute of an admiration not to be repressed.—

"It is time to leave! Irma! Your *further* art education must wait for the opening of Arthur's studio!" said Countess Olga, as the shadows deepened in the corners of the long corridor.——

"And *I* am, at your service!" brightly cried Arthur Randolph, gathering his colors. "A few days more, and my fingers will resume their dexterity! But, *when* shall I

have the sittings?—My new studio will be *all in order* next week."——

"Not until you have jointly finished the arrangement of my winter resting place!" interjected the Princess, as the party slowly moved to the great entrance, where the carriage awaited them!——

"I am at your orders, Princess," gaily answered Randolph, "but I must beg the fulfillment of Countess Olga's *promise!* I shall acquit you of all the claims of a faithful servitor when my poor art is essayed to catch the expression of the *Lady of Sitka!* A month has already glided away! It seems as if we had drifted back, out from *under the northern lights* into another world!"——

Countess Orlof, leaning back in the carriage, gazed fondly upon gentle Princess Beatrice. Her friend's eyes were shaded with the never absent anxiety of awaiting the telegram of Prince Maxutoff's arrival *at Nijni Novgorod.*—From the fair city by the Golden Gates of the blue Pacific to the gates of Dresden, in a daily increasing friendship, the Arctic pilgrims had passed on through scenes grown strangely unfamiliar to the long exiled ladies.—

Arthur Randolph's self-imposed task was done, when the wayfarers found a winter home prepared, with the ready aid of the Butzows, who welcomed gladly the graceful addition to the already brilliant Russian colony. It was the dawn of *another* life to Olga! A haven of peace and rest! And *Princess Irma of Alaska*, the child of snows, fluttered out in the quick expansion of eager childhood, a hovering butterfly.

But in the now happy circle, for Arthur Randolph's welcome home to his beloved brethren of art, had inspired him *anew*, there was but *one* serious face!—Loving Beatrice Maxutoff's heart was hungry for tidings of the lonely man ever dashing on in snow and storm,—'*in the name of the Czar!*'——

The doors of Madame Maxutoff's home received the returning art worshipers, and, as Arthur Randolph, laughingly promised to return and join the hospitable Russian family circle at dinner, he noted the air of astonishment with which Countess Orlof received the butler's announcement: "A *lady stranger* in the drawing-room desires to see *Madame la Comtesse!*"

"To see *me!*" said Olga in wonderment. "Have you her card?"

The grave servitor answered, bowing: "I was desired to say *'A lady from St. Petersburg.'*"——

Countess Olga was very pale, as she passed forward, while Arthur wonderingly took his departure. In all her sisterhood of years with Beatrice Maxutoff, her lips avoided framing that ominous name "*St. Petersburg!*"

Arthur's fleeting glance caught only the outline of a graceful figure and the graces of youth, as the mysterious stranger rose.——

"The stride of a Diana! I must hasten the ceremonies of my toilette. Perhaps, the Russian visitor may fill a sketch-book corner!"

Countess Olga gazed expectantly at a silent girl of twenty who stood smiling archly, *with outstretched arms!* Her brown eyes were winning in their appealing glances, as she started forward with girlish impulsiveness. In puzzled surprise, Olga saw the Butzow equipage, before the door. —It was impossible to resist the charm of a voice vibrating with a tender appeal, as the beauty clasped the stately Countess to her breast.

"Don't you *know me? I am Vera Orlof!*"

And when Beatrice Maxutoff entered, at Olga's joyous summons, the light of a *newly found love* and *an unhoped for happiness* shone in Olga's eyes! —

"Here is *one* who has come from the Neva to welcome *us* home! I am so happy, Beatrice, for my little Stephan *for the first time*, will *see an Orlof!*"

Olga's voice was quivering with an intensity of new feeling, but Vera, bright and eager, won instantly Princess Maxutoff's heart, as turning her trustful eyes on the woman who had saved Fedor's wife, she whispered :

" *You also,* must love me! I am your friend *for life,— for Olga's sake!* "

CHAPTER IX.

A TIMELY WARNING—BUTZOW'S BULLETIN—THE EMPEROR'S WELCOME—THE NIJNI NOVGOROD PRISON PEN—A MISSING PRINCE—"WE MUST TRUST TO VERA" THE LITTLE PRINCESS LOSES HER CORONET—ON THE FARALLONES.

Arthur Randolph, in mystified astonishment, sought for the reason of the sudden access of joyous excitement in the Maxutoff household, as he furtively examined himself in the drawing-room mirror on his return.

From the upper chambers came to his ears the sound of merry laughter and feminine glee. He hastily assured himself that he was en règle, for the butler, with pardonable pride, whispered:

"Monsieur Arthur! The *great Countess Vera Orlof* from St. Petersburg! Ah! Ciel! *What a beauty!* Like Marguerite in 'Les Huguenots!' Elle a vraiement le chic! The heiress of the House of Orlof! But, the little Count Stephan,—it is *he* who, one day, will be *the Orlof!*" —

"Qu' on est bien à vingt ans!" sings Beranger, and Arthur Randolph was soon the centre of the very happiest circle in beautiful Dresden! Dainty Irma had also found a new friend! Madame Maxutoff was eager to learn all the social details of the six years of her absence. The vague lore of womanhood's confidences was to be conned over, as Vera Orlof, the heiress of a rich and haughty line, the wit and darling of the circle of Maids of Honor, was so near the throne that the greatest secrets of state, as well as gossip of maid and gallant, were caught up easily by the insouciante beauty!—Olga Orlof's exquisite face glowed with the pride of happy motherhood, for she had at last seen her little Stephan clinging to the breast of the imperious beauty, now the *head of the Orlofs!*—

"You must let *me* love him, Olga," tenderly said the visitor. "For he will *displace me* some day! He will *rule our house!* You and I will *lose*, but to *love him more!* For when he has been fitted for his station, he will go out, at the head of his command In the name of the Czar! Oh! I have his future already mapped out! He is *mine* as well as *yours!* I have come hither simply to weave my web around Stephan,--for I must have him! I know I shall *hold you!* I have *so much* to say, to *tell you!* My two weeks are hardly long enough."

"And must you go homeward so soon?" earnestly asked Beatrice.

"The Empress says that she looks forward always with pleasure to *my* month on duty!" gaily cried Vera. "And, so make the most of me, for I am bidden to the palace the next month!"

As the vivacious girl, in loyal Russian mirth, drank to the 'Emperor and Empress,' in mimic abandon, Arthur wondered at the union of German seriousness, Gallic wit and finish, and the sweet tenderness of the Russian maiden of rank, in the demeanor of the young Countess.—

It was years before he knew better the distinguishing elegance of the girl graduates of the Catherine Institute. The dreams of introducing even the polite culture of women into uncouth Russia, which wild Peter imparted to *Martha Rabe*,—the unknown Swede's daughter,—were handed down *by her*, when, as *the great Catherine I*, she passed the heavy imperial crown down, to go through *other* hands, to Sophia of Zerbst, *little "Figchen"* of doubtful paternity! Whether *Frederic the Great*, the elegant *Betzky*, or simple *Christian of Anhalt* was the father of the *greater Catherine II*, is now of *no moment*! The two Empresses rest in the great fortress church, but history *rings with their great deeds!*—

In all the wild license, the burning ambitions, and stormy

discord of Catherine II's life, it is to her honor that the "Smolni Monastyr" was made the safe treasury of Russia's promising girl children! To-day, the mystic palace school on the Neva banks is a model of womanly education.—For the girl who played with the rosy peasant children in the streets of Stettin, became an Empress; even as great as Elizabeth of England! The 'Kaiserlinde,' planted by her childish hand, has long since withered away,—chubby German peasant children dance *no more* under that spreading lime tree,—for an *Empress of Prussia* and her *sister of Russia* treasure to-day tables made from its famous trunk! —This sturdy truant girl Sophie, reaching the throne of Russia by a romantic intrigue as fanciful as Peter's own *Martha Rabe*, found time to plant the great Catherine Institute, which lives and flourishes!—

Its tolerance, broad mental platform and singular influence results to-day in a magnificent, elegant *social paganism* which marks the three hundred annual *élèves* as a class apart from *all other* Russian women!

The dash, keenness, vivid passion, superb culture and mental fearlessness of the Russian woman of rank is traced to the firm hand of the dauntless "Lochen,"— ever *imperious*, and ever *successful!*—

Arthur Randolph, amazed at Vera Orlof's easy conquest of the family circle, saw only the effect of a regime which heightens personal pride, family tradition, imbues all womanly seductions, and makes the girl graduates of the Golden Mark, most valuable to the Czar's family policy. The selected successful maidens, after a service as Maids of Honor, which gives a personal attachment to the reigning family, become the wives of Generals, Governors, Ministers, Ambassadors and all the other *great servants of state!* —Then, the code of the Catherine Institute, expanded by the vivid lessons of court life, has full sweep when the Madame La Générale, or the Russian Ambassadress, often

becomes the very cleverest of Russia's foreign agents.—A deep insidious policy!——

The second of the *two great Catherines* realized that the greatest power on earth, unreachable by law, uncontrollable by haughty man, is the influence of women, *whether good or bad!*—For these *daughters of Eve rule the rulers* of the earth, and there is *no* plan so secret, *no* scheme so vast, *no* great interest imperilled, no forward or retrogressive movement of the refluent wave of humanity, in which woman's matchless arts *have not turned the tide!*——

The blind historian gropes to find some *graver* reason than a woman's melting smile, some more *powerful* agent than a woman's hate! The man of the study might measure the *effect* of these causes in *any* circle! For the answer to the riddle of woman's hidden sway is—Circumspice!—It flows through the home, the salon, the courts, the palace, the camp, and *sweeps around the world,* this woman influence, rising and falling, as truly as the heaving seas swing under the dominion of the changing moon! Unconquerable!——

Man (haughty and insolent), has ever *underestimated* woman!—His day of binding her with the chains of *legal inequality,* or a grudged *half education,* are done!—The sex is quietly omnipotent! For even godlike Napoleon, grumbling over tough mutton on his rock at St. Helena might recall his constant slurs upon womanhood, and realize that Josephine's arts *made him,* and Marie Louisa's callous inertia and lack of womanly faith *unmade him!*—Had the man of Austerlitz taken a *lion heart* like Catherine I, of Russia, to share the glittering unreality of the *stolen crown of the Empire,*—Waterloo would have been another Wagram! The greatest modern Cæsar might have held his sway to his dying day!

And, *together,* the imperial adventurers would have defied the *whole world in arms,* even as Peter and Catherine

curbed and checked the turbulent, unamalgamated Russians! It is singular that Napoleon Bonaparte, the *immortal parvenu* of the world, never realized the obstinate *power of womanhood!* His continued roughness and coarseness *alienated a sex* which *he undervalued*, and which *thoroughly despised him!*——

Long after Arthur Randolph wended his way home to his artist nest under the silver star beams, beautiful Vera Orlof sat by the feet of Olga in her apartment. The house was stilled.—Laughing Irma had taken her nightly leave of the infant Stephan, who for the *first time* in his long existence, had been gravely addressed as "Count Orlof!"—The dignity provoked no recognition beyond the attempt of two chubby fists to capture Vera's glittering necklace, an Empress' gift.

And so, to the cradle of a *convict's child* came the honors which the unhappy father lost *forever*, when he struck the mad blow in his midnight passion on the Neva! It was with sudden gravity that Countess Vera answered Beatrice Maxutoff's last earnest half-despairing query for the news of the traveler over the frozen Steppes.

"You will hear *first from Nijni Novgorod*, dear friend!" answered Vera, with a meaning glance at Olga. It was a timely warning!

"You know the military telegraph only reaches to there.—Baron Butzow told me tonight, to tell you that he has carefully followed the *maps*, the imperial courier's *trip records*, and looked the whole matter over.—He decides that you cannot hope to hear for a fortnight yet! And you know *the delays* incident to such a long sleigh voyage! All will be well! You know our Russia is the very land of *'Tomorrow!' 'Tomorrow!'* It is *worse than Turkey* for sluggishness!"

When she had kissed wistful Beatrice's trembling lips, and realized that they were alone, Vera quickly said to

Olga: "I will come to you!—In your room! *Alone!* I have something *to tell you! Poor Beatrice!* She must not hear!"——

"That is *why* I sent the carriage home, for Baron Butzow knows that I will stay with you!—*I was timid, Olga!*" said the beauty, as she spread lovely Olga's hair in a golden shower. In her loose gown, caught up from her new-found cousin's store, impulsive Vera was verifying the beauty which had once made the heart of a Czar's heir burn with an unholy ardor.—

"*But,—you are so kind to me,*—to receive me *so frankly!*" said the lovely and loving girl!

"And we can do so much together for little Stephan!"

She paused perforce, for she was clasped in an eager embrace by the tender mother, who knew at last the delicacy and gently-forgiving love of the woman whose father's blood was avenged on the "*lonely green island*" of the Tako.—

"Let me *lock* the door!" whispered Vera! "I have a true Russian's fear of the servants! They are the deadly spies of Russia! Even in the *Winter Palace,* though we are in the 'golden circle,' our coterie of 'Dames d'honneur' only whisper in the dark, when we steal to each other's beds! It is *one continued repression,*—our smooth, easy life! I have not dared to keep even a letter, a single scrap of paper! And *fire* is *my trusty friend!* I burn even *my private* letters! You can not know how deeply the toils are laid in Russia! You are not *Russian born,* my beautiful cousin!"

As she caressed the agitated listener, Vera said softly:

"I *see and hear all* at the Court! I trust *no one* but the *Empress,* and confide only in dear old Baron Butzow, who lets me call him 'Uncle' in return for my teasing. Now, I have *grave fears* for Prince Maxutoff! He has powerful enemies!—Yes;—*bitter enemies!*" sadly repeated Vera.

"Butzow did not wish me to tell you, for fear you would betray it to Beatrice Maxutoff! But I can *trust* you! We are to be friends *for life*, Olga! I am all alone in the world! I have *only* you! And, even in your sadness, *you have little Stephan!*"—

Olga Orlof raised the glowing girl's head from her bosom, where the brown-eyed one was nestling.

"*And is there no 'Prince Charming' yet?*"

Rosy blushes mantled Vera's face, as she said, slowly, in affected seriousness:

"There is no 'Prince Charming'—*yet*, for he has *four years' service* with his regiment in the Caucasus! I have forgotten *even his name*, until he finishes that desperate service! *Then*, if he is sent out in the foreign diplomatic service, I may remember my promise,—*if I can be an Ambassadress!*—But, *listen*, my dear one, the circle is headed by Count Fersen and by Serge Zubow, that ferocious-looking Tartar Prince! *Ah! You know him!*" hastily said Vera.

"He was at Sitka!" replied Olga. "Do not even *mention* his name to Beatrice! *She abhors him!*"

The quick-witted girl resumed, with a searching glance at Olga, who had become suddenly pale:

"There is a circle of schemers who seek to control *all the rich trade* of the North Pacific, now that Siberia will be developed. *I am only a girl.* But I can *hear* and *see!* The poor Czar! He is a *stranger* in his *own land!* He hears not the voice of his people! It filters through schemers, lick-spittles and lackey servants.—This Fersen and Zubow are allied with one Phillippi,—*a low merchant!*"

Vera spoke with all a patrician's disdain.

"I have seen this crafty Phillippi hovering around. He bribes and cajoles the half-paid clerks and secretaries. Now, Zubow has even dared to push his coarse flatteries *on me*——"

Vera started, for Olga Orlof strode up and down in excitement.

"I *dislike* the man, and as he tried to *force his presence* on me, I also *avoid Count Fersen!* He has a hold on the Emperor! They were at the Cadet School *together!* Now, Fersen's sister was also a Maid of Honor! She gives dinners and receptions at which this Phillippi and Zubow try to push on *in society!* Of course, *as a merchant*, Phillippi could *never* succeed,—but he has the Rothschild's money *behind him!* Serge Zubow is a reckless spendthrift at the Yacht Club. Helene Milutin's brother told her (she is my schoolmate in waiting on the Empress),—that he vowed one night at the Club that he and Phillippi would *ruin* Gregory Maxutoff! 'He is only a tool of his smart wife! Wait till he makes his reckoning!' So they boasted."

"I watched this eagerly, for my heart was already attached to *you*,—to *Baby Stephan!*"—

Now, Milutin, who is in the 'White Guards,'—'the Empress' own,'—told his sister to tell me that some *great disaster* has happened to Maxutoff out in Alaska! He heard these men laughing over it at the Three Bears restaurant, where all these rich schemers spend their ill-gotten money.—I am sure that Uncle Butzow knows something *too!* For when I told him, he only shook his head, and said: '*Poor Gregory! Poor fellow!* Poor little Princess of Alaska,—*her* future is dark enough! It is a terrible situation!' Everything is soon known at Petersburg. The whole city tattles! The Ministers, the Clubs, the salons, the banks, the Palace,—all is one mass of artful gossips, whispering viciously under their breath!"—

"Whether they have only trumped up *some trouble*, or there have been grave complaints, I can not tell, but Milutin says that Count Fersen is an *open enemy* of Prince Maxutoff and does not hesitate to proclaim his *future disgrace!*"

The earnest girl paused, and, caressing Olga's hand, whereon the turquoise ring still gleamed, said:

"Now, dear cousin, Uncle Butzow is old and tender-hearted,—he wishes *you* to watch over Beatrice! Be *with* her—*near* her! For, if trouble should come, they are *not rich!* There is—Irma, this pretty darling, to educate, to launch in that wild world of Court Life! If anything should happen to her husband, it would break Beatrice's heart!"

The sweet girl ceased, and said solemnly:

"It is *terrible*, the way they treat them! *No one ever knows! No one has a chance to explain!* I have seen an aide-de-camp dancing with a Grand Duchess in the white ball-room! *Three weeks later*, I saw him, his pale face haggard in anguish, in a line of men chained at the Moscow Station! I will never forget his eyes! They haunt me! *Oh! Russia! Russia!*"—

The girl buried her face in her hands. Olga thought of Beatrice crying "*Happy Russia!*"

When Vera Orlof had finished her disclosure, she looked at the dying fire and Olga's pale face! "*I have startled you!* I have brought back your own sad days! Now, it is only for Beatrice Maxutoff, that I have warned you so *quickly!* Butzow *bade* me do so! You must not grieve, my darling, for *you are safe*,—as long as you keep away from the Russian frontier! Your rosy Stephan *too* is safe,—for even the *Russian* laws give him the family dignity, and on his majority, *his father's lands!*—They are all held in the Orphans' Court for him! For *you*, beloved, I have directed the Orlof steward to acknowledge your drafts and orders as *my own* to the extent of *one-half my income!*"—

"I have the Empress' private promise that Stephan shall be named for *the Page Corps* and the *Cadet School* as soon as he reaches eight. I have seen his name entered on the list already! That *alone* is a full recognition of his rank!

—Butzow fears there may be some secret plot or dastardly attempt on Prince Maxutoff's life while traversing *the Ural district!* On these wild roads, Zubow and the savage nobles (his associates) are all powerful!—They rule all!—

"Milutin told me that bets had been made at the Club that Maxutoff would *never* reach Petersburg! I thought it only was the mad resentment of the 'old Russians'—for the sale of Alaska is thought by them to be the *seal of a national dishonor!* I see *now* that dear old Butzow fears some *dastardly crime!* But I will watch like a lynx at the Court,—I can *warn the Baron,*—he will send for you and tell you *alone,* any news of importance!"—

"If Maxutoff suffers from the resentment of Zubow, *on your account,* on account of my dear dead Uncle Fedor, *whom I loved so dearly,*"—the sympathetic girl was sobbing, —"I will gage the honor of the Orlofs, that Irma Maxutoff shall *never* want a friend! I would sell my last jewel to give *her a dowry!*"

The lovely Russian maiden's brown eyes flashed with an undying spirit.

"Vera! you are *a soul of fire and flame,—an angel!*" faltered Olga, who felt for the *first time* in her life, a warm kindred woman love lighting up her lonely heart. ——

"I am so happy that we are *one in feeling!*" cried Vera, as she bade her kinswoman a tender "Good night!" And the two women, now one in interest and love, slept while wifely Beatrice dreamed near them of the beloved traveler on the lonely Siberian wastes!——

One week after Vera Orlof's arrival at Dresden, her social conquest was complete! With rare tact, she remained domiciled at the Butzows, and her long rides with the sturdy nursling of the house enabled her to easily confer with Olga.——

Their carriage was followed by the admiring glances of the preux chevaliers of the city, as the halo of Vera's court

distinction, and the fabulous reports of her wealth and rank, pointed with deeper admiration the glances of the languishing swains! They pursued her in these social campaigns even to the easy retirement of Butzow's home,—and the artful social leaders thronged ever Arthur Randolph's studio, where Vera's face flashed its provoking beauty from the gray cloud wreath of a sketch portrait!—"I can even not *do you justice*," mourned Randolph,—you are *holding a reception always,—even here!*"—

The lines of haunting care were marked daily deeper on Beatrice Maxutoff's brow, and the longing in her eyes touched all hearts!—

"He must soon be here! He *must* come every day! A longing, a fear, a strange terror seizes me!" cried Beatrice, when she made Olga her full confidant. "*See!* The buds are beginning to break upon the lime trees now! *Ah! my heart,—my waiting heart!*"—

And gazing at her child, the fondly cherished little Princess of Alaska, crowned so in a mother's happy dreams, her heart sank within her!—

But *four days* remained of vivacious Vera's stay, for the Imperial mistress must meet her bright *protegées* smile on the appointed day, when Olga Orlof brought her thrilling music to a sudden silence with a crash of keys! The sound of her glorious voice was heard again in the happy home where Stephan now began to essay his first walking tours and the roses of the Spring were glowing on the beautiful widow's cheeks! *There was music in her inmost heart!* For every detail of the fatherless toddler's future career was settled by a loving kindness, the blessing and the property of two tender womanly hearts.—

Vera Orlof, a swift Camilla, her eyes eager with a new interest, brought hope and light into the room with her!

"*Where is Beatrice?*" the light-footed beauty cried, as she glanced around.

"She will return in a half hour!" answered Olga, deliberately imprisoning the glowing girl in her firm white arms. "*You have good news*,—you pretty witch!"——

"*Yes!* Uncle Butzow has received a private cipher telegram from *Kazan!* Prince Gregory passed Kazan yesterday *alone and well!*—He will then take the steamer to Nijni Novgorod, up the Volga. It is only two hundred miles! Butzow tells me that he had passed on before a telegram he sent could reach him, but he will get it at *Nijni!* Now, as Prince Gregory will surely post from Nijni to Moscow, and take the rail from there to Petersburg, *I will see him first!* It may be from *Moscow* that you will have his first dispatch, or *from Petersburg!* He will travel by imperial post faster than the letters, for he has an Imperial double speed Podrovjna order! Everything waits for him! *Oh! I am so happy!* I am sure that the Emperor will dignify his return! *Prince and Princess of Alaska!* Fersen whispered *that secret* to the ladies of the Court on his first return! Prince Gregory has earned it!"——

And the delighted young aristocrat waltzed around the parlors with sweet Irma, whose bright face was added to the rejoicing circle! It was a delicious awakening to fair Beatrice when she returned, for even Stephan Orlof had recognized by undue blinking of his innocent blue eyes, that some great happiness had come upon them! To her own room, the scene of so many silent kneelings before the jewelled corner shrine, the devoted Princess Maxutoff fled to offer up the outpouring of a thankful heart.——

The gratitude of an Emperor! The welcome of the Czarina! The plaudits of the coast! "*Ah! I envy you your happiness!*" was Vera's prophecy of the harvest of new honors!——

When, three days later, silver-haired old Baron Butzow pledged "*the Czar*," at the home feast given to mark the flitting of merry, deep-hearted Vera, all the circle in heartfelt

joy gaily drank the wine which danced upon the crystal goblet's rim!——

A vision of entrancing loveliness in her furs, Stephan's fairy god-mother clung to noble Olga's bosom when the clanging bells told of a parting.

"*Butzow knows all, dear!* I will send him at once dispatches by cipher! I shall instantly find Prince Gregory, and give your greetings to him! And, *remember*, Olga, I will come to *you!*—to my *little playmate*,—whenever you *need me!* But *you* must *never* cross the frontier until *all* the clouds are lifted!"——

With a laughing nod to all, the bright, happy face of the favorite maiden of the good Empress was lost to sight.

The days seemed doubly long when Vera's gay laugh died upon their ears! The Maxutoff house was silent, for a strained expectancy confined Beatrice within herself. Resolute and steadfast, Olga Orlof busied herself with Irma, affected to spend much time with the growing young mischief, Count Stephan, and escaped to meet Baron Butzow's grave face and listen to his anxious forebodings. Every hour was ominous as it was knelled from the clock.

The two loving comrades of Arctic exile said: "*We will hear tomorrow!*" as they parted each night in silence.

And Prince Maxutoff's whereabouts were yet unknown! It was *passing strange!*

Alas! The heart of Olga Orlof was soon burdened with a double secret: "*Why does not Vera write us?*" whispered Beatrice, whose pale face accentuated her sunken eyes! In a gloomy, expectant silence even the servants moved around. For, close on her heart, Olga had concealed an anxious letter from Vera, and Butzow vainly lingered over the stern words of a Nijni Novgorod cipher telegram!——

"I now fear some hidden trouble! *Something dreadful!* —Prince Gregory has *not* yet reached St. Petersburg, and even Milutin shakes his head gravely! I will find out what

I can, but do, at once, telegraph me! I am so anxious! Surely, Prince Maxutoff must have come to you incognito. Ah! Poor darling Beatrice! Be very wise! Any great shock would kill her!'

Such was pretty Vera's Pandora budget!—And still *no* news of the missing Prince!

Veteran Butzow, a retired ambassador, murmured with trembling lips, for *he knew* his Russia,—"*My God! He has not passed through Nijni!* Then, *where* is he?"

He dared not frame an answer, for *Happy Russia* had eaten up his saddened life in its desperate service! A thousand past sad happenings flashed over the old noble's memory!

"*I* can not tell her! Olga *must!* For I fear that the little Princess of Alaska *has lost her father!*"

And the *phantom* coronet of honor had in truth faded from her pure young brows!

Three days later, Butzow and Olga stood by the bed of a suffering one who moaned unceasing, "*Gregory! My husband! Come to me!*"

Alas!—The truth could be concealed *no longer!* For Vera's cautious letters, tinged with an awful fear, finally sealed their hopes in a helpless sorrow!—

At St. Petersburg, Prince Maxutoff was now officially acknowledged to be missing! And no one dared even to speak of him! The prayers of the loving ones at Dresden could not reach *the gloomy prison pens* at Nijni Novgorod, —and Baron Butzow, with streaming eyes, cried:

"Olga! We must guard and *save* her,—and our *little Irma!* As for help to the *lost one,—we must trust to Vera!*"

Two months crawled away in an agonizing suspense unbroken by positive tidings. The happy nest at Dresden was deserted by her who ruled it. The breath of early summer swept in at the open windows where Countess Olga Orlof communed alone with Arthur Randolph. The

house was quiet with a strange hush for the shadow fallen on it was clearly betokened in little Irma's *black robe!* Fatherless perchance, *motherless*, for a time, as in the Bernese Alps, the good Butzow and his noble-hearted wife sought to lift the settled melancholy from the invalid's brow.—

"Arthur! What can I say to thank you for *your* devotion?" murmured Olga, now the representative head of the strangely scattered family. The burden of sorrow which had been lifted from her soul, rested upon the benefactors so dear to them both. Randolph had gone into anxious manhood with a bound! The early blooming of his talent, the varied experience of a roving boyhood, and the counsels of the wise old commander, raised him to a wisdom beyond his years! Ardent in his affections, loyally attached to his friends, he had gallantly offered his services for a *secret trip* to St. Petersburg!—Walking in the Winter Palace gardens, where the fleeting Russian summer was already presaged by the burgeon of the timid trees, he advised at length with Milutin and conferred in furtive half hours with that most dainty Maid of Honor, the Countess Vera Orlof!—

"It is an *impenetrable mystery*, Arthur!" sadly murmured Vera, as they walked where the boom of the evening gun smote on their ears, like a funeral knell, from Peters' gloomy fortress! All hope died out in Arthur's breast when Countess Vera said:

"The only whisper I have heard lately is that Count Fersen has preferred *the most serious charges* against Prince Maxutoff, touching the affairs of the Russian Fur Company,—the Emperor's funds, and the handling of the government property! To make these matters worse, several denizens of Sitka, returned under the Treaty, now add their factious complaints! I am persuaded that, alive or dead, Maxutoff's reputation is to be ruined, for the merchant

Phillippi is again at his usual haunts, and loudly boasting that Prince Serge Zubow will soon arrive as the chief government witness against dear Beatrice's husband!"—

"God help him! *He is lost then!*" groaned Arthur, thinking of the coarse virulence of the Tartar, at Sitka, for he had there heard Zubow swear that Maxutoff's head should be dragged down in ruin!

"I shudder *to say it*, Arthur," fearfully whispered the Czarina's favorite, "but I fear that Prince Gregory is *detained*,—until this unfair inquest is over,—*away in the wild Volga country*,—in the hands of the *secret police!*—If he should be finally disgraced or degraded, he may be sent later to the Caucasus, to Asia, or to Turkestan's burning sands, as a *military slave!* They would not send him back to Siberia, for it would *openly disgrace* the Crown's dignity! He may be held to give *forced information*,—for he knows much of all these Alaskan *secret transactions*, in fact, *all*, save the hidden cabinet intrigues of Petersburg!"

There were blinding tears in Countess Vera's tender eyes, as she bade adieu to the American artist knight errant!

"I do not dare now to open my family house,—to *entertain* you! I might be easily ruined *by suspicions!* Then, I *could not* help in any way our poor friends! Tell our Olga that I *dare not write!* The mail is all examined!—I may even now be spied upon! I will, however, send my German maid on to Dresden, if I have a vital disclosure to communicate! Uncle Butzow will send his old courier on here to me,—*he* can take back any answers! Ah! Arthur! We must be as brother and sister now,—for *I* have little Stephan's future in my hands,—and *you*, dear Arthur, have sworn to be *Irma's champion!* God be with you!"——

The American in the gloomy gardens of the murder-haunted palace, in sight of the polygon fortress where Peter's unfortunate son, Alexei, was thrown a headless

corpse into a fosse, swore to the bright-eyed girl Princess his loyal fealty unto death! For Irma's wondering eyes had asked of him: "*Where is my father?*" when, in mercy, Olga had bade the graceful child *be silent!* Her little heart *would not* be stilled in its wistful demand,—the cravings of innocent filial Love!——

"Arthur!" said the singer, whose music was now mute again when he was again at her side.—"I have a charge to *lay upon you!* I am possessed *with new fears.* I know not what! We are watched! I fear for all of us!—*Even* for Irma, my poor little fatherless Princess of Alaska! I have written to Baron Butzow to send me one of his own brave retainers, bred in his domain, to be a vigilant guard here by *night and day!* I shall ask *you* to be our guest,—the sentinel of loving loyalty until the faithful man arrives!"

Randolph wondered at the fair woman's pale face and faltering voice. He became, by right of generous manhood, the watchful home guardian of friendless little Irma.——

In his own apartments, thinking over the continued mystery of Maxutoff's vanishing from all human ken, he became heavy-hearted as the weeks passed by, and even the active Vera had no new tidings! A temporary studio enabled him to use his leisure hours, for he had given up his usual evenings at the wild artist club reunions. Armed watchful, ready,—he entered into the home life, he learned to hang in rapture on Olga Orlof's exquisite voice, and the shy passion flower, Irma, daily unfolded her beautiful nature in silence at his side.—Master Stephan Orlof *alone* rolled and gambolled around in unconscious glee!

Countess Olga dared not tell the ignominy of Zubow's past personal insults to *Vera,* even to *Arthur,*—and, she now shrank from giving the chivalric artist the real reason of her sudden demand for his protection! In the evening twilight, while Arthur was absent on the Neva, in sight of the dungeon where Peter's son howled under the lash of the

common hangman, the brutal face of Serge Zubow, mocking in its triumph, was suddenly thrust into her presence as she walked alone!——

"The Prince has *not yet returned*,—I believe!" sneered the coward, lifting his hat in mock civility!

The terror of this apparition was *but increased* when old Baron Butzow wrote from the invalid's place of convalescence: "Alas! my child! I *now* abandon all hope! I have met here in Switzerland a retired General, just arrived, who saw poor Gregory Maxutoff's agonized face, *in a draft of common prisoners at Astrakan*,—crossing *the Caspian Sea!* —Who has sent him to Asia? Who judges him? He must have been deported *secretly* down the Volga! General Ostrokoff dared not speak fully of the affair. You will soon, I fear, be forced to be a second mother to Irma,—my darling little favorite,—as well as to watch over your son!"——

While Countess Olga waited to confer on this momentous disclosure with Vera Orlof, watching at the great centre of intrigue, she saw with her quick woman wit, that in some way, Zubow must have known of the *Prince's downfall*,—perchance, even *jeered at him in chains!*

"I see," she cried,—"Fersen, Phillippi, Zubow, all these three villains have conspired, but *why?* What dark designs have they really to cover?"

And she hastened to send Butzow's old courier over the frontier to the Winter Palace to exchange the burdens of this *new certainty of sorrow* with Countess Vera, her one remaining friend!—In her gratitude for the old days at Baranoff, for the years of sisterhood under the northern lights, Olga Orlof swore in her gentle heart, by the memory of him who lay by Indian River's dashing waters, leaping in freedom from the blue crags, to shield helpless Irma Maxutoff from the chill blasts of fate,—*the icy breath of Happy Russia!*——

Far away in the wild huddle of San Francisco, a moody, irritable man now paced the city's irregular wharves, day by day, and watched every incoming trader and whaler. Paul Bradford's pale cheeks were sunken and haggard with the internal fires of a gnawing disappointment! *By day,* at the Merchant's Exchange, *at night,* roughly clad, haunting the saloons and sailor boarding houses on the city front, or feverishly driving to the Cliff House or signal station, the journalist Bohemian never relaxed his vigilance! He had passed long months in a maze of bitter suspicion.—*French Pete had vanished!*—In his pocket, a letter from a distinguished statesman was a continual reminder to Bradford of the huge stake for which he played, *a share of the Golden Island!*——

"Bradford!" wrote his secret master, "I know that the *many* fail,—the *few* succeed! Your reward will be a glorious one, a good share of the property, and a high political place in the new territory of Alaska,—an *official station,* which will allow you to watch over *my* interests and also guard *your own* share! Leave no stone unturned! This convict straggler will be found on some incoming whaling vessel. Use the contingent money freely! My agent has orders to supply you! The island *must* be, *shall* be, ours! I sometimes think it may *only* be one of the thousand fiord headlands! It seems strange we can not find it yet! I am holding back the new territorial organization, until *we are safe,*—and until some *other matters,* of no moment to you, are properly arranged."—

When Paul Bradford returned, after the "Reindeer" had put to sea on a new annual cruise, he sought his room to con over his diary and ponder again upon Aleck McMann's last words!

"Can this sailor *be hoodwinking* me?" Bradford

watched the smoke wreath of his cigar gloomily. "I believe not," he said, as he laid away a heavy revolver, a more constant companion than his note-book. "I would have killed him at the first sign of flinching!" —

In all the stormy interviews of the "Reindeer's" refitting days, the mate had sturdily repeated his original story, when, Bradford leaping on a tug when the whaler was sighted on her return, had reached the "Reindeer" far outside the Heads!—There had been no chance for any previous communication with the shore, as the staunch little steamer had pushed far out over the bar, and not even a lateen-sailed fisher boat, with its desperate Italian crew! dared ride the swell outside!

"That's the whole story! You have it! I suppose Pete sneaked over to Japan!" bluntly insisted the mate when Paul, *for once in a visible excitement*, stoutly urged the seeming paradox of Chief Oo-ni-mak's *later* account, —The mariner never blenched, and Bradford was fain to be contented. In the intervals of his duty in bringing the ship in, McMann recounted the lying and dishonest habits of the Karlouk natives!

"These fellows have learned their tricks from the Russians! Thieving and lying is their regular trade! *Besides*, Bradford, the old chief himself is a *notorious* scoundrel! Either your missing man was run off *by them* to some interior reindeer camp, or he may have been spirited away by the *smart fellows* he *served once*, who wished to close his mouth forever on their nefarious secrets! He *may be* in Kamschatka jail, he may have been *tossed overboard* in the Behring Sea,—or landed on some penal island, or have been put ashore on one of the Kuriles! It is *my belief* that he may have been run off on some *other* American trader or whaler!—He might have taught the trading Indians some mean tricks. If

he had any enemy he might have been spirited away to save him! There is as yet, no law but *cunning* or *force* up there! The fellow was a *good navigator*, I am told.—It is possible some one may have wanted to make a trading raid on the unguarded Russian coast! There's good pickings there," cried McMann with a broad grin. "Some flying skirmisher of a Yankee, 'making a run in,' may have 'shanghaied' him?"

The mate laughed loudly, as he cut out a section of tobacco from a huge plug.

"*What is shanghaing?*" moodily demanded Bradford.

"Running him off and *forcing him to serve!*" guffawed McMann. "I have often filled out a crew up there by getting the natives on board, and dosing them with rum! I have afterwards turned them loose on the first handy island! Now, if *your man's* in the Arctic, I'll surely find him on this cruise! I shall knock around everywhere! I will watch for him! You can trust *me!*" he boasted.—

This was the sum of Bradford's wasted year! A varied experience of bitter disappointment! When he threw aside his note-book, he paced the room like a tiger.

"I believe I'll go on to Washington now, and *see the Chief!*" he growled. "If I could get a roving commission of some kind, and a little revenue cutter, I might find the gold region myself!—But a thousand American miners would then swarm in! It must be a *still hunt!*"

The baffled schemer walked the lonely streets till midnight came to clear his fevered brain.—

As he did, the staunch "Reindeer" was throwing the spray of the rolling swell high in air, as she forged on past the Farallones, with a nine knot breeze! McMann in sou'wester and boots, binoculars in hand, gazed upon a high, gloomy granite crag rising on the starboard bow!

Twenty-four miles astern, the fog bell at Fort Point was sadly booming out its heavy dull tones, but from the twenty foot brick tower on the crag, a quarter of a mile distant, every ten seconds, only a revolving white light flared out to warn the wary steersman!

"Send up up *two green lights* at the fore peak!" shouted McMann, as he noted the crag's position. In ten minutes, three answering red lights, twinkled, side by side, at the base of the lantern tower!—

"*Good!*" laughed the mate, draining his flask. "My particular friend, *Mr. French Pete*, is all right! That brute Bradford has vainly combed the town to find him! *He is safe!* I will trust him with Black Duffy! He will stay on that rock till we need him!"—

Away into the night the "Reindeer" swept with straining sails right into the teeth of a storm! A man grumbling in maudlin quarrel stood at the light house door as the whaler scudded by!—

"Here's *your* supper and *some whiskey!* Now,—get to your hut!" cried a rough voice, as Pierre Lefranc seized the viands and shambled away. For months, he had only seen the five bare, gray islets around the rough crag he trod on! A passing ship, a fleet of fisher boats, the myriad gulls covering the four hundred feet of vertical height of the peak, with their huge speckled eggs, —this, beyond storm and sleep, was his bestial life's horizon. On this gloomy, barren rock, *visited but once a year*, when supplies were left for the light-house keeper and his rough chum, Lefranc was forcibly herded like a wild boar! He was Aleck McMann's prisoner and the useless secret of the mines maddened him!

"'*Why* are you *here?*" laughed Duffy.

"You'll *find out some day,—I* can't tell you! *You'd know too much!*"

At night, locked in a rough hut, the semi-deranged outcast dreamed only of his freedom! The lonely rock was McMann's favorite smuggling depot, and while the customs officers slept at the city, the criminal sailor fraternity of the North Pacific used this shelter for their dark frauds!

CHAPTER X.

THE CONFEDERATES—PAUL BRADFORD IN THE SENATE ANTE-ROOM—A FAT LEASE—MY PATENT—"FIND THAT MAN, AND YOU FIND YOUR FORTUNE!"—VERA'S DISCOVERY—THE WRATH OF AN EMPRESS—"BREAD UPON THE WATERS."

Black Duffy and "Mr. Haley," his associate keeper, were snug enough in their solid martello light-house tower, as the night fell on the seething waste of waters around the South Farallon. The flash of the revolving light lit up the boiling black waters, and far away, Bonita Light and Punta de los Reyes, Fort Point and Alcatraz answered the cheering signals of the South Farallon! The screaming sea birds had settled in the clefts of the rocks, and the great rock towering desolate in air was lashed by the wild breakers! The blowing wrack hid the five smaller islets, and through the leaded windows, only the ghostly lantern flash of a belated coaster, or the red and green signals of a steamer, gleamed as they sought the narrow entrance of San Francisco Bay.—

For there, on her hills, by the superb land-locked sea, the restless panther of the west crouched on her heights, behind the grinning guns of Fort Point! The greasy cards and black bottle were on the table, as with due solemnity, Duffy opened the one-thousandth set of euchre games!

"We've done enough to-day for Uncle Sam! *What a night!* I'm glad we've a solid rock a mile long, and four hundred feet above that foaming storm lashed water! This *is the devil's own place!* Not ten days a year when

a green horn can land here safely!" Duffy winked as he took a three fingered dram. "*But Aleck McMann can always make the trip!*"—

"Every time!" grinned Haley. "Mac! I wonder you never are bothered here! With all the silk and opium smuggling! With all the cigars and smuggling devilment goin' on here!"—

"Nonsense, ye fool!" rejoined Duffy. "This place hasn't a radish growing on it! *It's only useful to the gang!* Why, in San Francisco, there's a nest of quiet robber gangs that work neatly together, *each on their own bailiwick*! There's yer politicians, the brokers, the bankers, the merchants, the China trade, the whalers, the smugglers, and now, there's a great combination making up '*to scoop in*' the whole Alaska country! They have the Senators and Congressmen with them, and they all keep *off each other's heels!* This smart, duck McMann has a big backin' of thim rich whalers and traders!—They'll run rum enough up in the Arctic in the next ten years, to get every bit of fur and pound of bone on both *sides* of the Sea! I've been up there! It is a wild region! ——This Alaska!"——

"Is the place any good?" said Haley, mixing his stiff grog.

"Ah! There's timber and fisheries an', perhaps, *some* little *gold!*" slowly said Duffy. "These big grabbers will get the lot of it! There's no law in the Arctic! They can do *as they wish!*"

"What are they keepin' the poor French devil so long *here* for? I can almost *pity* him!" said Haley.

Duffy laughed softly and dealt the cards!"—

"Oh! I'm thinkin' McMann is only hidin' him away from his *rich backers!* They're all watchin' each other, till they get Governors and laws up there! An' this fel-

low knows somethin' that Mc wants *to use, by an' by!*"—

"Poor devil!" said Haley. "Well, he's warm enough after all with the old stuff and rags,—an' his fishin' an' wanderin' round here *does no harm!*—You must watch *him close* when the Inspector comes!"——

"Ah! Bless yer! "*Over he goes,* on the *North* Farallones till they're away! An' I keep the boat key tied around my neck!—McMann is always 'sound *on the pay!*'" And the matter-of-fact villains struggled over the painted unrealities of the cards, drinking and carousing at will, for they were officers of a *great republic!*"——

A mighty land whose stars were neither *thirteen* nor *forty-four,* when Cabrillo, Ferrelo and the freebooters first saw the barren granite islets sharp finger raising out of the wind-lashed waters, and masking the Golden Gate! Dashing swashbuckler and wild rover, Sir Francis Drake, in 1579, was misled by them, a hundred and fifty years before Peter the Great, a dying man, gave Vitus Behring the orders, which were confirmed in three days by a *new ruler!*—Good Queen Bess lost a princely stronghold for British commerce, when Drake in doubt bore north, and *thus* missed peerless San Francisco Bay! By a strange fatality, Russia and England blundered, and the stories of Fort Ross and Drake's Bay remain to-day as monuments of the mistakes of great explorers, while San-Francisco Bay was finally discovered only by toilsome *overland* marches directed by the Marquis de Croix, Viceroy of Mexico! Cook, Bougainville and Vancouver *all* were baffled by the dense fog mantle of the *witch of the Golden Gate!*——

The stout "Reindeer" driving north, as the good ship settled down to a steady course, beyond the foamy bar, now long leagues behind, and bore away a happy and triumphant man in the person of Alexander McMann!

As he plotted and smoked in his snug cabin, he mused over Bradford's utter helplessness! "By Heavens! I am sure to be able to make my terms *on the mine yet!* All the Russian officials are gone far away now! The American army officers will not rove around much! Merchants and traders will not have a chance to throng north till the territory is organized. But I must have some one at once to help me locate this land and get a title! Then, *it is all right!* Whom shall I work with? Zubow and his Russian crowd? No! *They are a cold lot of thieves!* By this time, they have surely got the big dismantled Russian ship *out of Victoria* harbor, and all their furs are safely sent off to Europe, in innocent hands! *What a grand robbery!* A million dollars, a good stout ship, and *all her property!*"

McMann heaved a sigh! "I would liked to have been that big, stupid-looking Finnish mate who *ran away* with her! How sly Prince Zubow was to work *him* secretly on board!"——

"Poor Prince Maxutoff! *He was a square man!* And, by jingo, he never *will know* how they stole the Emperor's stuff from him! Trust these devils! *Never!* So that lays out Messrs. *Zubow, Phillippi & Co.!*—This fellow, Eben Tomlinson, — cold-hearted Yank — is out also working *for the dollar!* And he is *too* friendly with them. They are all birds of a feather!"—

"If I knew really who is behind Paul Bradford, I might deal with *him*, but his mean eye, his sneaking way, his cold, malignant gambler face! I would not trust that smooth scoundrel! It must be some heavy political influence! I suppose it is the '*bank gang*' of *ruling upstarts!*—Can he be off to Washington?"

"If I knew that to be true, I would go on there *myself* after this cruise, and make terms, but Paul Bradford's

watchers would surely hound me down." Drawing off his sea boots, the wary sailor threw himself on his bunk, and laughed as he closed his eyes, for he had easily outwitted the lounging San Francisco spies who drank with him *at Bradford's expense!* Like many other skillful weavers of toils Paul, (his mind concentrated on his own schemes), undervalued always the wit and resources of *his enemy!*—

As the son of Neptune drifted away on the uneasy sea of his dreams, lulled by the musical clang of four bells, Paul Bradford, watchful and ever suave, was pacing the library of a cosy San Francisco mansion. Its appointments bespoke easy wealth, and its luxurious gardens were lifted far above the haunts of trade, but the fabulous magnificence of later "*Nob Hill*" was yet in the womb of the future!—It was in the ante-Bonanza days!—

The journalist's grave manner mocked the studied elegance of his evening apparel!— A feast, a ball, rather than a conference, would have been properly the theatre for his unusual personal display.

"I see nothing to do now but to go on to Washington," slowly ejaculated Bradford. "You say that the Senator's dispatch is absolutely *imperative*?" "*Yes*," answered the agent, a gray-haired man of affairs of fifty. "As the steamer sails at noon to-morrow, I can safely telegraph your departure to-morrow night.—Thanks to *our friends* next year we will have a railway from sea to sea! By the way, let me give you a check,—*you must have need for money!* Give me a memorandum receipt here for what you need. *How much?*"——

William Herron's steady eye never quivered, as Paul handed him a receipt for a considerable sum. He gave a crisp slip of gray paper to Bradford, who nursed his cigar as they faced each other. "You are sure that you

can not reach this *mysterious French refugee?*" sharply remarked Herron. "It would be awkward for you and me if the *Senator* should find him rising up at the wrong time!——

"Lefranc is not in the State, and I have exhausted *every* open avenue of information! I know these Russian operators as well as all their dupes, the officials are now all in the Czars domains at home!—He never reached *here*, wherever he *did* sail to on that unknown vessel from Kodiak! In dining with the French Consul to-night, I carefully covered the whole ground. I make an excuse of some Sitka inquiries to bring the old matter up again. —The old functionary is on the eve of his retirement on a life pension, and is closing all up ere he finally returns to France. I intimated that a matter of some *money advantage* awaited this *Pierre Lefranc!* The good old man informed me that he had inserted his name in the official list of Frenchmen advertised for both at *Victoria* and *here*, and with no effect! The romantic incident of Lefranc's disclosure of the gold beds and their resultant fortunes, has become musty in the mind of the easy-going old man.—I am *more puzzled* than ever! If violence or revenge were the object, 'French Pete' could have been easily shot down and left for the overawed natives to bury! I do not think that the Russians intrigued to *take him away!*—He could have been reached by them at any time *before!* And as *no* prospecting party has been fitted out here yet to operate in Alaska, I am sure, if alive, he is not following the mining matter up just yet."——

"What shall you advise the Senator?" said Herron, his cold face lambent with thought. "I see nothing but for him to allow the territorial organization to be at once perfected, under the usual Senatorial dominating power in regard to all *appointments.*—The places of *Register of*

Lands, and *Surveyor of the new Territory*, can, by one pretext and another, be controlled or delayed. Meanwhile, on a revenue cutter, if I am made Special Agent, I can examine the whole coast, *with unlimited power*, as to my landing and at Government expense! In finding any location suiting the Frenchman's map and descriptions, and the old Shaman's relations to the Senator's personal expert, as well as Tomlinson's story, then I should direct a patent or patents to be quietly issued to our people for *all the land* resembling the requirements."

"*You are right!*" simply said Herron. "The main object of your present order East, is to prepare intelligent press matter, artfully distributed, to back the proposed fur transactions and exclusive leases! As I have told you, already, that powerful circle will co-operate with us, and keep stragglers and adventurers from getting in on the coast.—*One* such injudicious admission might bring such a crowd as are rushing in to the *Black Hills*, now! So, as the Senator sorely needs your aid, this properly done, he can then have you *sent north as Special Agent*, with full powers to divert the Revenue Cutter at will.—The many vessels going up will only be allowed to touch at Sitka,—the lazy army officers will never enter the moss covered land,—and you can artfully control the whole Alaskan coast until the great monopoly fur contracts go *to the right people* next year! It is a giant labor for our principal to handle.—Once the inquisitive people of the coast are practically shut out of Alaska, the garrisons will give up their control and, then, turn all things over to the civil officials, *all appointed in our own interest!* It is understood that our secret circle are to have all the *shore* privileges, if *we let the Prybiloffs alone!* Are you all ready to go?"

"I *am* prepared! I wonder if, in following up the

departing Russian officials *at home*, I could not close up the missing links of the chain tying down this coveted 'golden island' to a *fixed* location.—Champagne and a bit of ready money always loosens the *Russian heart!*" "Quite the *same here*, Bradford!" plainly said the man of business. "It is, however, a great stake *to play for*, and your wit and nerve must *make it a success!* You remember what the Senator said before he went East:—*Find me that man,—and your fortune is made!*"—

"I will find him, *if alive! I never failed yet!*" resolutely said the departing journalist. "As to the public,—the simple sheep whose creed is found in the *oracle aping* opinions of journalism, I shall be able to lead *it* where the chief wants *it*:—into the idea that Alaska is *merely a desolate shore*, a *doubtful purchase.*"——

"*Correct!* And, with a little manipulation at the custom house and steamship offices, we can hold the territory, under a snug '*regency*,' *as long as we need to!* I feel that we will surely succeed,—that there is a *future for us*, under the northern lights! Well,—the Senator's daily cipher dispatch from me will advise you of all!—Good night and a *safe voyage!*" The midnight found William Herron at his condensed reports, for he daily reported to the great magnate who had *Alaska* tightly tied up until the parcelling thereof was effected!—

Bradford journeyed eastward to join the horde of secret schemers infesting Washington, and often, on the twenty days' voyage, wondered if *Princess Maxutoff* had carried away any valuable secrets from Sitka! "There seemed to be *more* than a mere avoidance in her behavior towards me! But if the Prince knew of the gold regions himself why did he not *secure them*? Did he wait to receive his patent from the Czar as *Prince of Alaska?*" Paul had not fathomed the dark tragedy of the day when Fedor Orlof's

blood stained the springy moss,—and he *never* fancied that in far Asia, the mysteriously concealed prisoner of an enraged Czar, Gregory Maxutoff, was to-day lost to the haunts of men,—and that *gentle Beatrice*, with her child growing up only to a *heritage of sorrow*, mutely waited for some manifestation of the Czar's uplifted hand!——

Paul Bradford's mind was bent on the final conquest of fickle fortune, as he sauntered up through the Capitol Park at Washington four weeks later. The great dome surmounted with Freedom's allegorical figure, swung in majestic uplifted outlines over the huge marble pile, the focal point of America's wavering, flickering national life fever! It was in the early summer, and fresh breezes moved the fragrant blossoms on the trees.—Far away, over the noble Potomac, the white portico of Arlington shone out as grandly as when the mighty Washington dreamed of his country's future there in the peaceful evening of his life! There the patriot mused, perchance, over the golden words of his Farewell Address, his prophetic mind reaching out to the troubles of, perhaps, *foreign* invasion, *domestic* discord, and even future *anarchistic* troubles! The sage knew that the sword of State even, if sheathed, should be *ever at hand!* Before he laid his tired head to rest, lulled by the rippling river he loved at Mount Vernon, did the First President ever dream of a victorious British foe, lighting the work of gifted Pierre l'Enfant in *war's conflagrations*?—of the stars and stripes trampled *under a foreign foe's feet*? Did he dream of the Nullification fever?—of panic and bankruptcy?—of the slavery shame's black cloud?—of the *rebel flag* flying in pride long years after at Munson's Hall?—Did he dream of the corruption of our debauched councils?—of Credit Mobilier's blasting infamy?—of the

impeachment of *one* President? of the *murder* of the national martyr, Lincoln?—His affrighted eyes would have shunned the sight of Garfield, the self-made American, *assassinated* in his hour of *personal triumph!*—For the recent laurels of the forum, the unfaded wreaths of electoral victory decked the slaughtered President's shroud!

Did Washington see the coming stream of *impure alien immigration,*—the growing *class pride,* the *mushroom aristocracy* and *super-Roman* luxury of the close of the *first century* of American Presidents?——

Though he *knew* of royalty laying its head on the block, of a public French *negation of God,* of the sweep of war's baleful torch over all of defenseless Europe, and the *age of unreason,* did he close his eyes, in 1799, in the belief that *republican simplicity* would prevent future national disorders? Alas! alas! The *hero and sage* is no more a prophet than the *court fool!*

Mr. Paul Bradford's mind was *not* fixed on Washington's faith in *the dubious future of the United States,* as he climbed the great western marble stairs! He was intent on effecting an arrangement to *rob* the Government of a considerable portion of its *valuable mineral lands!* He realized that the master whose telegram had called him sharply from New York's pleasures to an interview *in the Senate's anteroom,*—was one of the *powerful uncrowned Kings of America!*—— a product of our later time!——

Bradford gazed at the crowd hurrying into the noble *Palace of Liberty!* They seemed eagerly intent on their particular *patriotic* business! Like him, they ignored the grand vista, the sweep of the royal avenue, the far reaches of the blue Potomac, the great straggling city, *so lately a fortress capital,*—at once a headquarters,—a prison, and a vast hospital, and where, while battle-fields

and an army's graves lay within sight, the devotees of *wine* and *wassail* joyed over easy gotten *public plunder!*

"Are these people *all* on a *stealing expedition?*" he mused! "I wonder if Uncle Sam will ever *grow poor!*—I sincerely *hope not*—— until I have thrust *myself* into the place of *a favored heir!*"——

As Paul Bradford passed under the great gateway of a national palace costing forty millions of dollars, his eye rested on the Long Bridge, over which, under Generals Mansfield and Heintzleman, dashing Colonel Dan Butterfield led the advance of the Union Army, on May 24, 1861.—The long, ghastly columns of armed men then gleamed spectral under that full May moon!—The stars, mirrored in the silent Potomac, shone down in pity on the graves of a *half million of warring American soldiers* before Lee submitted four years later, at Appomattox, to the invincible Grant! *Then,* and not till *then,* was the stain of slavery washed out forever in the blood of brothers from a flag left polluted by our *temporizing forefathers!*—— For the Revolutionary heroes dared not open that Pandora's box!—*They left it to their innoeent heirs!*

"*Bother the soldiers!*" thought Bradford. "*They* came here to *die* for their country! *I* came here, to live *by it!*—The *pen* is mighty,——*mightier* than the sword!—The voice of the orator, the votes of the imperious Senator, the unscrupulous Congressman, the signature of the President——*in our days,* deal out fortunes rivaling the gilded phantasms evoked by Aladdin's Lamp!——

Into the august presence of the country's virtuous legislators, Bradford strolled, his approving eye idly resting, in passing, on painted victories, pictured face of hero, and chiseled bust of sage!—He was a pilgrim among the busy throng who have "*axes to grind!*" The crowd

—of grasping, fevered Americans, who covet acres, timber tracts, Indian lands, fisheries, mineral treasures and franchises, continually attack the guarded millions of the National Treasury, fitly builded *open on all sides,* and with *many entrances!*—A truly republican *strong box!*

Bradford, a typical lobbyist,—cold, heartless, semi-educated, and conscienceless, cared naught for the equal rights, the evolution of American character, the educational millennium, the lightening of the *burdens of real life,* promised to all in *the Land of the Free!* He wanted only *plunder!*

He cared little whether America became the land of the *demagogue,* the *rioter,* the base-browed *alien contract laborer,* or of the *ward politician* and *armed 'heeler!'* He recked not whether *strikers, 'walking delegates,' 'Molly Maguires,'* or their ultimate development, *'the dynamiter,'* terrorized the land! *He was a 'business man'* in his own peculiar way!—— A *loyal* citizen!——

Paul Bradford was in the seething whirlpool of the era of the *"carpet bagger,"* the *"whiskey ring,"* the *"Freedmen's Bureau"* sham, and the days of *"subsidizing railroads!"* *He was fitly placed!*—

He well knew that the *acute and haughty Senator* who waited his call, buttoned *many a desperate secret in his breast* under a decorous frock! Smooth, daring, deadly, grasping and hypocritical, the Senator held *the Pacific coast 'grab bag,'* tightly throttled, in his firm hand! As *pliant* and *unscrupulous* as a man could be, Paul Bradford's little star had crawled toward the zenith, lost in the effulgence of this *'rising statesman's'* dazzling orb!—

"Ah!" sneered Bradford, as he waited in the Senate ante-chamber, "How *admirably* arranged for *'rushing legislation'* and *'transacting business!'*—House, Senate, Supreme Court, *all* under *one* roof! Library, palatial

restaurant, an *anonymous* cash office, ready with its piles of crisp greenbacks, meeting rooms, pliant journalists, fair lobbyists, ready telegraph,—*truly*, the *Lords of the Senate* are lodged like princes!—And, they have the dummy President of the United States *under their royal thumbs!*"

A page, who had borne in Bradford's card, brought him quickly a message:

"*The Senator will see you in a few moments.*"—

Gravely bowing, Bradford awaited the arrival of the magnate whose whisper had called him from far San Francisco,—whose motioning index finger had sent him to the ice mountains of Kodiak,—and whose sly schemes for the appropriation and *monopolization* of Alaska should enrich *him*, the wary journalist, as well as the vague "*leading citizens*" who lurked *behind the toga* of the Senator!—

The journalist dropped into one of the people's easy chairs!—

"I *serve* now, he *shall—later!*" growled Bradford, growing impatient in his delay! But his hypocritical face relaxed in a ready smile as the alert statesman entered!—The great man hastily greeted his pliant spy!—

"Just going into committee! Meet me at the east portico *at five?* We will drive out, and *dine!* I wish to have a long talk!—Nothing new? I wish you to stay here with me for a *month or two!* Get a handy boarding house *near me!* I shall need you often *at night.*"—

Paul's eye flashed with understanding and obedience, as he bowed and uttered a chance remark for the benefit of a group of patient, honest supplicants, vainly gazing for the "pages" who never come!—"They also serve who only stand and wait!" The service of the neglected suppliant!—

"I will at once domicile myself!" mused Bradford, with a quiet smile. "I have three leisure hours!" He moved forth with alert strides, conscious of his future success.—His eye rested on a great canvas of the First Congress of the United States!

"These newer fellows have a better house than the dingy old hall where *Jefferson, Hamilton, Jay* and *Adams* prated of the future blessings of the *baby Republic,*—and they have legislated better,—*for themselves,*—and for *their friends!* The country *can take care of itself,* but my Senator must take care of *himself* first, and *of me!* The 'public interest' demands the conservation of the '*good things*' of Alaska!"

As Bradford gaily dashed down Pennsylvania Avenue, where the resounding tread of the victors waked once the echoes of the feet of the myriads who marched away to unknown graves, Paul mused on the great mad life of the war, as he had recently seen it! Around the White House, where homely Abraham Lincoln bore up his cares and *Freedom's sinking cause* in the gloom of four horrible years of civil war, Bradford had seen thirty-three miles of fortifications, with sixty-eight huge forts bristling with twelve hundred cannon, and the gray hosts of the rebel General Early,—flushed with victory,—fighting *in the limits,* in the shady *city gardens,*—by the flash of their murderous guns, pouring lead into brothers' bosoms!

"That *was* a Babylon of war! Treason, vice, cowardice, and the seduction of a Paphian army, with everywhere dishonesty and cupidity! It beggared all belief! Though tough old Uncle Sam *has* survived it! Who says we are not a *strong* country?"

He grinned with *loyal* pride!

Paul merrily laughed as he thought of the new twinkling stars silvering the blue field of the sturdy young country's banner! There was no thought in his keen-witted mind of the gradual *crystallization of the plutocracy,*—of the invisible "death line" of fate, which would give to *one woman* a two hundred thousand dollar *diamond necklace* and *crown,* and allot to the serving girl *two dollars a week!*—Of days when the rising tide of molten gold would *silence all social remonstrance,*—when the toiler must do reverence to the Gessler cap of *his master,*—and when the greedy eyes of *hungry Americans* would glare wolfishly through the plate glass of *millionaire clubs!*—

"This is a good town to be in,——if you are *on the right side!*" jovially exclaimed Paul, as he rapidly sought a well-known quiet haven of rest,—"I propose *to aid in the development of Alaska,*—— the furthering of the Senator's interests, and help all the little games now forming,——patriotically, *for a valuable consideration!*"——

Bradford's eye gleamed with pride as he seated himself later by the Senator's side in the statesman's carriage. The easy swing of its velvety springs suggested his similar luxury of *the happy future!*—His 'distinguished companion' kept bolt upright, acknowledging many salutes, until the '*thin fringe of magnificence*' gave way *to the rawness of the outskirts of the capital.*"—As they rolled on and passed the deeply scarred breasts of the hills where the ramparts were already crumbling, the Senator cautiously satisfied himself that they were alone. His coachman was *actually,*——not *conveniently,*——deaf! "All I need is *his hands and eyes!* I will manage him!" the legislator often remarked. His neatest touches of private finesse were often effected as he leaned back on the easy cushions of his splendid vehicle. A *sober ele-*

gance marked his public state,——just as a judicious *slyness* veiled the steel of his unerring grasp! He was at once a *development* and *legacy* of the great conflict.—The Civil War's wounds were still deep scars in the country's bosom, but the *poisoned blood* of its *demoralization* has since sapped our national life for thirty years!——

It was in *the "War,"* that *our statesmen* found the easy way to gain their *individual* desires!—Private thievery in a national Golgotha!——

Sharply glancing at the now deserted driveway, the Senator fixed his eyes on Bradford.

"So you have *not* found *that man* yet! What can have occurred?"

Paul briefly recounted the final efforts of his useless search.

"Ah!" mused the Senator, *"It is very awkward!* The *possible* existence of that man is a standing menace to my future plans! Either *dead* or *alive*, the *certainty* of his *fate* would enable me to know how to act! I hold the whole North Policy still tied up, but I can not delay it *beyond one session more!"*

"Why so?" guardedly remarked Bradford, anxious to see the real scheme at last unfolded!——

"Our friends, in interest, dare not be longer put off in the *awarding of the contracts for the maritime sealing interests!* This is an almost *international* arrangement, as *certain people* are interested on the *Russian* side, as well as *here.*—And we will later make *ourselves* the Princes of Alaska! I have been urged by several members of the Russian Legation, and by a great Russian merchant, Phillippi, who was here, and by letters from his partner, *Prince Zubow*, to aid in regulating *the world's fur supply*, by leasing our islands, so that the general market may neither be *overstocked*, nor left *bare!* There are great

considerations of prudence involved in this! A *heavy pressure* has been brought to *bear* on me!"——

The Senator jingled thoughtlessly *the coins in his pocket!* Bradford could not repress a smile.

"Now, the administration will soon act for various reasons! Some form of territorial government *must* be set up! It will require *a Land Office* there, so that private claims can be established and property recorded!—

"*Now*, Bradford," said the Senator earnestly, "I have sent on to Russia, through Phillippi and this Zubow, as well as Count Fersen, the Imperial Commissioner, to find out if *any grants* or *tracts* of land were ever given to *private parties* under the seal of the Czar's Empire! I will have the full official news soon! The archives and papers have surely reached St. Petersburg *by this time!* If there are none such, and the Russian Legation *here* knows of *none yet*, I shall have *you* named as the *first* Deputy U. S. Surveyor General for Alaska! I will keep the rush of miners and prospectors *out* till next fall, when the session of Congress opens; and then the Seal Island business will be disposed of, as arranged in our *secret programme! You* will then have all my journalistic direction and public opinion manufacturing finished! Sent up on a revenue cutter you will be *the first official on the ground!* No man can board her, unless by the authority of a high officer in San Francisco, who is *our real mainstay* in the Alaska regency! You will carry *the machinery of your office* with you, and, as the harbors do not freeze, your surveys, maps and selection can be at once made, the plans finished and ready by spring! I will have the verified admission of the Russians that *there are no Muscovite grants of record!* The Russian American Fur Company finally relinquished to our Government *all their local rights!* The ports and forts, with

the trading posts, are now national property! I will have *your* surveys begin at a geographical point designated in the orders of the Secretary of the Interior, and quickly accepted! The grants, patents and proper title papers once legally issued to me, *for our associates*, then the general office can be *publicly opened!* We will cover the whole location of these gold depsoits by taking *enough!* You can hold it safely *for us*, and if it proves what I have reason to expect, we will then send machinery and supplies there. *After that*, the vulgar herd can stream in! They will get nothing! There are, of course, some few river placers on the Stickeen River, but our own valuable locality must be first located, granted and guarded."——

"But how can *you*, who have *never* been in Alaska, direct this great venture?" Bradford asked, in amazement at the network of vast schemes centering in the sly Senator!——

"This Serge Zubow, a powerful Siberian Prince, *alone* knows of the *exact* location of the 'Golden Island!'—He learned it in a secret expedition with the very French refugee whom now we vainly seek!—Now, we have *no one* to fear but this 'French Pete,' and should he ever be found, he must be cajoled, carefully handled and *led up to the north!* In *your* skillful hands, he would be *harmless* to us! If he gets there, under *your* guidance, you can verify Zubow's disclosures and gain what further *secret* knowledge he has! *After that*,"—the Senator paused.—He was *always* a prudent man!——

"What then?" anxiously asked Bradford, as the carriage drew up at the Senator's favorite dining resort,—a cosy, embowered cottage, from whence modern Egerias often glanced anxiously for the familiar faces of the Congressional Numas, who sought a delicious inspiration in this secluded retreat!——

"*He must stay there!*" firmly answered the scheming statesman,——"*forever!* You can attend to *his* interests!" Paul Bradford's heart and soul were *steeped in corruption,* but he had not yet reached the *black depths of cowardly assassination!* His hand shook, as he pledged the Senator: "*To the Golden Island!*"

"How did you gain *this key* to the situation. demanded Paul, now secure of the confidence of his master.

"Why!" replied the Senator, glancing around the portico, where they awaited the summons to dinner. "*Prince Zubow bribed an old Indian Chief, now dead,* to *betray* Prince Maxutoff, the Russian Governor! This old savage hated the Muscovites, and was held years in bondage till the Governor General *forced the secret from him!* Maxutoff evidently wished to secretly secure the grants *from the Czar!* Zubow, in hiding, followed the expedition sent out by Maxutoff under *a Russian ex-noble! This man is dead!* Now, the old Chief *is dead also!* Maxutoff was finally baffled, for the country was suddenly turned over to us! *He never saw the island himself. He dared not leave his post at Sitka!* His *head* might have answered for it! Possessed of this secret, *even Zubow could not use it,* for he only learned it *too late* for action! The treaty was already signed! But, he has a *sketch map* and careful *details of* his own, made up from the memory and from the Chief's disclosures, and 'French Pete's' discoveries. *The find was valueless to him!*"—

"And how does this all *come to you?*" slowly said Bradford, after they were seated in the privacy of a special room.

"Because I am to direct the Seal Island business in their interest, as well as ours, and effect the *secret international co-operation,—then,* from Phillippi, who comes

here next winter, I will receive the maps and full sailing directions! I will locate enough land to cover a whole township! We are guarded against all that may happen but the untoward re-appearance of this *'French Pete,' before my title is finally secured!* Have you *any* idea of this man's real fate?" the Senator concluded, with an anxious brow. *"Millions may depend on it!"*—He doubted Paul in his heart!

"I believe, after hearing *your recital,* that the man whom we seek, feared your friend Zubow, and has only eluded him because he thought Zubow would *kill him,* so that he, *himself* might be the *sole depositary* of the key to the enigma of the Golden Island,——lying to-day gleaming under the northern lights!" Bradford was carefully pondering the past.

"But *who* could have kidnapped him?" said the Senator, dexterously finishing a chef-d'oeuvre of bird carving.——

"McMann, the sailor, may have wormed the Prince's secret out of this drunken convict! He may have hidden him on some one of the lonely Arctic islands, and *be waiting* till entries may be safely made! The sly American mate was often on this Zubow's ship, at Sitka!"

A light was dawning on Bradford!—*The clumsy mate had outwitted him!*——

"You have solved the riddle!" the Senator cried. "The game *is* a royal one! That fellow McMann is backed by the smartest junta of pirate whalers who ever sent *a rum cargo,* up to the Arctic!—I must *at once* perfect the title! I am supremely *anxious about* this!"

The Senator's face glowed with keen thought, *"You must not leave me,* until you go west with your full official powers, meet the Revenue steamer and then push up north at once! The provisional government will be loca-

ted at Sitka! As for the sailor, we will *head him off!* But, *'French Pete,' this Lefranc,* who is at once, educated and crafty, *he might cause us grave trouble.*"

"*Never forget!*" cried the Senator, as he filled Bradford's glass, "he is the *one* dangerous enemy! *Find that man——and you find your fortune!* The Pacific Railroad will be finished in the early fall! You shall go on, and, the moment the *lease is signed,* and I have *Phillippi's disclosure,*—sally out to *secure* the treasure island! *And hold it we will, against all comers!*"

Mr. Paul Bradford's brain, excited with wine, continued, in his dreams, the fruitless search for *'French Pete!'* Through uneasy slumbers, the forbidding face of Mate McCann haunted him, and he heard him saying, "He *is mine!*——You shall *never* see his face!" And under the gray Alaskan fog, the island lay far away, unclaimed in its loneliness!—

The summer roses were faded now, and their dying breath made sweet the banks of the Elbe.——*Still,* no news reached Countess Olga of her kind protector's fate! Before the fresh airs of autumn drew down from the southern mountains, kindly old Butzow led Beatrice Maxutoff back to her home, broken-hearted, to rejoin the little circle of tender hearts who loved her.——

There was a mute appeal in her lovely eyes, as Beatrice turned a pale face on Olga, and flashed one glance of supplication on Arthur Randolph. The sympathetic American was long haunted by that look, and in later years, a little sketch which he would never part with, bore the name of "Our Lady of Pain!" It was the Princess' inmost heart agony which shone there, transferred to the canvas,——for Randolph had often watched her fold her darling child, Irma, to her bosom, in an abandonment of grief! The pretty little Princess of

Alaska clung even closer now, to her mother in childish affection.—The mother's pale, delicate lips were silent save when she whispered "*My poor, fatherless darling!*"—And the Czar was ominously silent!—

"*I fear there is no future hope!*" sighed stout old Butzow to Countess Olga, when mother and child were reunited in a transport of despair. "The doctor tells me there is nothing to expect as to her final recovery, less some facts may transpire, as to Prince Gregory's dark fate. And yet, even *bad news travels fast!* The black horses of Destiny always rush on, trampling down human hearts, at a mad, relentless gallop! If I am spared," cried the courtly diplomatic veteran, "you can always count on me!—I have even conferred, *secretly*, with our resident Minister, as to the efficacy of a *personal appeal* to the Emperor. I was his Governor in his younger days.—But a newer generation has swept me from the Czar's remembrance! *Princes have short memories!* My colleague, (once my junior attache), caught me in his arms and begged me to refrain!—'*At your peril, dear old friend!*' said he. *It would only ruin us all!*"—Already the 'affair Maxutoff' is whispered of as one of the darkest official corruption and intrigue!—I believe that there is *no one* bold enough to risk his own standing by asking awkward questions:——suspicion, danger, and ruin, would follow any *active* interference! *There is but one in the world*, who can aid poor Beatrice now! Bright-eyed Vera Orlof is the *darling* of the Empress! Only the Czarina's own presence is to-day sacred from the spy in our unhappy land! The Russian heart is always right.—The Czar is *kindly* and *generous!* It is the *system alone* which reeks with corruption at every channel of its successive communication!—Alas! The *nearest* favorite,—the *successful* general,——the *dictator* of the

hour,——the *financier* of a season,——all *these* puppets are autocratic! For they mould and handle the *iron will of the Czar*, who is *ignorant* of the *wail of the oppressed*! An avalanche, a multitude of official papers covers *the point at issue*, in *every Russian pleading!*"

"I must then, invoke *Vera's aid!* Will she *dare* to supplicate the Empress? She *alone* can save the future of our Little Princess of Alaska!"

The Countess Olga drew the curly-headed toddler, Stephan, to her bosom, "Will it not break the golden links of Vera's bond to the gentle Czarina?" And the beautiful mother thought of her Stephan's future!

"*Love may dare all!*" gently said Butzow. "There is the spirit of the indomitable Orlofs in Vera. *And the Empress is a gentle soul!* All she daily hears is the servile chorus: '*Happy Russia!*'—Flattering sycophants mislead our sovereigns, who are, *in the main*, royal and warm-hearted, even in their *autocratic* loneliness! Now, let *me* think over a plan! *I will see you to-morrow!* Be careful, *vigilant!* You may be watched yourself, *even here!*"

As the silver-haired old Butzow left her, Olga dared not tell even *him* of Serge Zubow's threatening proximity.—

"Only *one care* the more to haunt me! He can not dream of seriously pursuing me!"

Had the Countess Olga glanced in the cheval glass, she would have seen the glowing loveliness which *even now*, tempted the reckless Tartar's passions, his yet unslaked revenge and a bitter, burning desire going *hand in hand!*——

For, as Zubow paced the aisle of the long car whirling him past the dreary birch woods of the Neva, at Count Fersen's call, he dreamed still of the wondrous

fair face which had gazed seaward from old Baranoff Castle's gallery, to wait the unreturning husband of her heart! The Tartar Prince threw himself on the cushions of his stateroom.

"I will be free *after a few weeks!* Fersen's telegram tells me the concession has been already signed! We are now ready to close with the crafty Americans! Their Congress meets in two months.—And from Phillippi's letter, their great public lease competition of the fur islands is only a dumb show,—Every bid, every figure, is at *our* secret service! And I *must keep my word* with the Senator! Phillippi and myself can verify the contracts over *there!* He *shall have the useless secrets of the island!* But *this woman,* she seems to be quite decently lodged!—*Has she any money?*—Or did Maxutoff fill his pockets with a little Arctic plunder?—If poverty would bring her my way,—*I would make her the Belle of Khamschatka!* By God! *I would tame her haughty pride!* The public ruin of Maxutoff, the confiscation, will set these people finally adrift! If I could *lure her into Poland,* I could have her easily spirited away to Tomsk! *Bah! She's not worth it!*"—he cried, draining his flask. "*Only a revenge!* To see her sue! To hear her plead! *We will see! We will see! Countess Olga!*"——

It was with a gloomy foreboding that Olga Orlof received, as she sat alone pondering Beatrice's woes, the butler's statement: "A serving woman, Madame, to see you,—*from St. Petersburg,*" he whispered slyly.

The house was lonely, for Arthur Randolph had led his pretty friend Irma out to the enchanted land of the theatre! It was late, and Beatrice's sorrows were veiled in slumber's nepenthe.——

"Take her to *my room,* and I will join her there at once! It is from Vera—and—*the tidings?*"

Five minutes later, Countess Olga had finished the letters the faithful German maid had quilted in her gown.

"Excuse the late hour, my lady, but Countess Vera bade me seek you *at once!*"—The sturdy domestic heaved a happy sigh, as she realized that she was once more in the Vaterland!——

"It is all right,—*you have done well,* Bertha," kindly replied Countess Olga. "You are to wait here as my maid, while I may need you at any time! A fortnight's rest and *a home visit* will do you good!—You must simply be *'my new maid,'* and—*silence!*—as to *where you came from,* and *all you know!*"

"*Ah!* Madame!" the maid joyously said. "We servants are quick to learn, *in Russia! I know my lessons now!* You may trust me *to the last!*"

And the Abigail sought her rest, in a happy pride, at having borne her letters safely out past the prying Russian police!——

Beside her table, the light shining on her pale face, lit up with the thrill of newer shadows over her beloved Beatrice, Vera's letter was carefully studied by the one friend left to the missing Prince Maxutoff!——

"I can write *but little,* yet it tells *the story of a life,*—the *ruin* of a family's hopes—the *disgrace* of a great name! —It is public *at last,* that the two fur ships have utterly disappeared!—One was wrecked, and the other has never been heard from!—The Emperor's archives and governmental papers are also missing!—Milutin tells me that Prince Maxutoff himself is accused of a great robbery, of secret plunder and even high treason! The Princess of Alaska will *never* come to her ill-starred kingdom!—The Privy Council has called peremptorily on Count Fersen and Prince Serge Zubow for the fullest reports and details!

And Prince Gregory Maxutoff, Governor General and Viceroy, is *a disgraced—a ruined man!*—The suspicion that he has somewhere concealed the funds, papers and valuables, is already a general one. I hasten to send my good Bertha to you! *Beware of spies!* Be careful of traps and snares to lure *any* or *all* of you over the frontier! Watch even your own person,—and *guard your home!* I have seen Count Fersen and Prince Zubow busied at the Winter Palace every day this week! Milutin tells me that Fersen was closeted two hours *alone* with the Emperor! An inquisition is to be set on foot at once, and Count Fersen will *direct all!* As for poor Prince Gregory, it is *clear* that he is held in far Asia apart from all communication, until the Government has exhausted all efforts in examinations of every kind!—Last, and *above all,* I advise you to have Beatrice and Irma sent, *at once,* to free Switzerland! *You must stay at Dresden!* It might bring ruin to *me,*—to *you,*—to *Stephan's future,*—for the beloved Empress has herself promised me to name him *this year,* on the list for *special Page instruction!* Keep Bertha, and let her go to Switzerland for a few months with *Princess Beatrice!* Act at once! *A day may lose all!* If Beatrice is summoned to Russia, you must trust only to good Baron Butzow's wise advice! I will get my other letters smuggled out to you, safely, by Milutin's friends going abroad.—They will be all under cover to dear Uncle Butzow! Telegraph me at once; "*I am better,*" when Beatrice is safe in Switzerland. The Empress and all the Arch-duchesses are in a general wrath, over the loss of the *Imperial Household Furs* collected, in long years for the members of the Czar's family!

"Alas! *Alas!* I must *now* tell poor Beatrice the whole sad story of his ruin! The two millions of furs were stolen *by those banded thieves*:—Fersen and Zubow!—*I know it!* Her own safety even demands the disclosure.

—Switzerland is the *only haven* in Europe where Russia's stern mandate can not recall my poor darling! I can not bear to leave her in sorrow!—As for *my* return to Russia.—I fear it,—and Zubow lurks there, *like a ravening wolf!* All I can do *is to pray!*—Pray God that I may help to shield my benefactress and guard her darling child!—For Irma, the little Princess of Sorrow's dark heritage—I would die at need. I *must* act the very moment the day dawns!—To-morrow night Beatrice and Irma must be *on Swiss territory!*—I must *save* them!—I must return their '*Bread cast upon the Waters!*' "——

The fair Countess' blinding tears moistened her pillow, before her agitated heart finally yielded to fatigue! She slept in fevered dreams, and when the dawn lit up the home-like German city, Countess Olga, white-faced, but composed, was at her labors of preparation for the day's flitting, long before Princess Beatrice awoke to her unavailing sorrows. And Arthur Randolph learned, with blank amazement, the new troubles of his unprotected friends! "It is *monstrous*,—a deliberate plot *to ruin the innocent Maxutoffs!* There has been *foul play!* This *Fersen* and *Zubow*—" He was interrupted by the sudden arrival of Baron Butzow, shaking with excitement, who claimed instant attention? "*Ah! my friends! What shall be done?* I was early awakened by the Russian Minister, who will be here *forthwith!* A telegraphic order, (in cipher), directs him *to seize and seal every paper of Prince Maxutoff's here*, and to *hold* Princess Beatrice, on pain of confiscation of her rights and her child's estates, *ready* to obey a summons, with her child, to appear at St. Petersburg! Gregory Maxutoff has been publicly legally *degraded*, and his individual estates have been forfeited, to the Orphans' Court, to be administered *to his family*,—unless they are proved to be involved in his crimes!—Ah! *Here he comes!*"

BOOK III.

THE CLAWS OF MIDAS.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MINISTER'S QUEST—ZUBOW'S TRIUMPH—AN APPEAL TO THE CZARINA'S HEART—THE LITTLE PRINCESS' KNIGHTLY CHAMPION—AT WASHINGTON—A PACT CONCLUDED — "THE GOLDEN ISLAND IS MINE!"— BRADFORD'S NEW DIGNITY — THE PRISONER OF THE FARALLONES — AT THE ISLAND — THE CLAWS OF MIDAS —TWO CLAIMANTS TO NATURE'S TREASURY.

"I think that I will retire to my room, Baron," said Arthur Randolph, whose heart could not bear to witness the helpless sufferings of Princess Beatrice Maxutoff under the crushing news of a husband's disgrace. He was at the door of the rear drawing-room as the Russian Minister was ushered into the salon. Arthur's hand was on the door-knob, when Countess Olga, her eyes aflame at the indignity of an official search, seized his wrist. She had seen the Secretary and two bearded attaches of the Legation hesitating in the hallway.

"Arthur! Wait for me in your own room! I may need *you* at any moment!"—

The American artist bowed and his dark eyes flashed in silent sympathy.——

While the Legation underlings watched each other in the hall, Randolph, slowly mounting the stairs, walked

with the pride of a free-born citizen into his room and, then, with a sudden inspiration, slipped a very effective looking navy revolver into the breast of his artist blouse! It was characteristic of a nation who believe in the perpetual handiness of that 'blessed invention' of Colonel Colt, which has aided so many human beings into an '*unexpected debut*' in the other world!—The house was perfectly still, save for the ringing laughter of that youthful dignitary Count Stephan Orlof, who was busily engaged in a game of early romps with merry Irma.——

The Minister of His Imperial Highness, the Czar of all the Russias,—coughed slightly and was visibly embarrassed as he greeted his old colleague. Baron Butzow sat bolt upright, his stern visage redder than the button of the Muscovite order on his coat lapel.—— There was an awkward pause!

"I regret to be obliged, Madame Orlof, to ask for an *immediate* interview with Princess Maxutoff," said the Minister.—"But we are all Russian subjects here,—and my esteemed predecessor, Baron Butzow, is aware of the gravity of this occasion.—— I have, in fact, asked him here to be a witness of the entire propriety of my official actions. I am directed to make an examination of all the private papers of Prince Gregory Maxutoff, and to notify the Princess of an important order of the Minister of the Interior, gravely affecting her own interests, as well as those of her child!—Will you kindly *request* her to favor me with an immediate interview?"

"You are aware, your Excellency, that my friend is seriously suffering,—that she is unable to sustain any sudden excitements,—and that she is burdened with a heavy sorrow?" There were tears in Olga Orlof's eyes, but her silvery voice thrilled with indignant scorn.

"Unfortunately, Countess Orlof, *I must perform my*

painful duty!—It is the will of the Czar!" The official laid his hand upon his heart, as he bowed low to escape Madam Orlof's flashing eyes. Her bosom rose and fell, and she trembled slightly, but she quietly moved to the door.——

"I will *summon* Madame Maxutoff!" Olga rejoined, and passed up the stairs. With the quickness of woman's wit, she had noted the stolid-faced chancellors waiting with their portfolios under their arms, and now ready to affix the portentous seals of the Russian Legation.——

"Ah! *I must hasten!*" The singer Countess held her breath, for a sudden inspiration had seized her. Passing quietly into Beatrice Maxutoff's room, she laid her finger on her lips, as Randolph standing in his door, motioned to her. Every word could easily be heard below stairs, if uttered in an ordinary tone.—

Arthur still waited, his heart beating wildly, for he heard Olga say: "Pray do step down, *at once*, and see Baron Butzow, dear Beatrice. It is very important that *you should go at once!* I will join you in a moment!"

With timid wonderment in her sad eyes, the graceful Princess descended the stairway. Her gentle voice in its alarm, had reached Randolph, who had stepped back. "What can have happened?" The gentle woman leaned heavily on the oaken baluster, as she slowly went to her fate,—*alone!*—

"What can Olga mean by *this* conduct?" thought Arthur. "The shock of this scene may kill her!"

That question was never answered, for a woman as beautiful as a springing tigress glided by the astonished artist, and entered his room.—— In a whisper which thrilled his very marrow, Olga pointed to a heavy leathern dispatch box she had softly placed on the table. Her eye rested on the American camp color flag which,

in a spirit of boyish fancy, Arthur Randolph had wreathed over his bachelor mantel.—

"Arthur! *There* is the title of *Irma's* fortune!—and of *Mine!*—All our papers! *Guard them with your life! You* are a freeman!" She grasped his arm convulsively, as she pointed to the *red, white and blue,* in its faded silken splendor! *Your* room cannot be legally searched! Hide them! Quick! *Quick!*" and, without another word, she descended the stairway, as a woman's scream was heard in piercing agony below, with the following sound of a heavy fall.

"My God! And I must stand here *helpless!*" Randolph's hot blood, the inheritance of a gallant race, was now at fever heat, but he sprang to his own wardrobe, and hastily concealed the heavy case, behind his artistic debris. He locked the closet door, and slipped the key in his pocket.—

From the salon below, the sound of entreaty, of expostulation, of Baron Butzow's tremulous voice, of the Minister's grave accents in answer, floated up the hall.—There was no sound near him save the movement of the neat handed Bertha, leading the youthful Stephan below.——

Standing in his door, Arthur, with a quick motion, warned Princess Irma, who, with girlish wonderment, was about to obey a summons to join her mother. The little Princess of Alaska smiled back at her brave young champion. The lovely woman blossom fixed her trust in Arthur, who was seated, calmly smoking by his open door, when two of the burly officials who had briefly visited the other chambers, now appeared before him.—

"*I beg your pardon!* This is *my* room!"—said the artist, as he firmly planted his stalwart frame in the doorway. There was a blank look of astonishment on the

face of the first comer, who roughly tried to enter the room. Flung across the landing, he fell prone, while the yell of his fugitive companion brought the Minister, followed by Baron Butzow, at once to the upper landing. In the doorway they saw a remarkably calm young man, with a somewhat antiquated American guidon in his left hand, and a very modern looking revolver, cocked and ready, in his right!—

"Do you pretend to *interfere with my officers* executing their duty?" snarled the representative of the Czar. Arthur Randolph thought of the beautiful child, whose future, perhaps, depended on his present coolness. He answered politely, for he knew the Minister as an accomplished art patron.—A dilettante who, with all the arts of a cunning Slav, spoke English with the ease acquired in his days of attacheship at Washington.——

"I hope that they will only execute *their duty*, Your Excellency!—and *not go beyond it!* When they do,—remember that *I am an American citizen,—native born!* I do not choose to have any one force their way in here!" He thought of Alaska's child Princess,—of her imperilled inheritance,—and his youthful brow grew grave and stern.——

The calm face of Countess Orlof lit up with pride and secret gratitude, as she flashed a glance of thankful intelligence at the resolute artist, who stood steadfast on guard with his flag in hand. Olga turned to the diplomat: "Can not this fracas be avoided? Madame Maxutoff may seriously suffer from these rough proceedings! I beg you to spare us *as far as possible!*"—

"I *insist* upon satisfying myself as to the contents of this room!" rejoined the excited Minister. For his underlings now watching him, might be secret spies!

His own future might be endangered by any lukewarmness! He pressed resolutely forward.

"Hold! *You madman!* Cross but this threshold, and I will put a ball in your heart!" the artist cried, as he levelled his ready weapon. There was no uncertain ring in the accents, for Arthur thought of Olga Orlof's last whisper: "*For Irma's sake!*"—"I will send to the *American* Minister! I will summon the *German* police! I seek the valuable hidden papers of the Russian Government!" persisted the official, with a nervous glance at Randolph's right arm, for the young man stood sternly at bay, like a soldier holding his last shot!—The Princess of Alaska's dowry was in the very clutch of the enemy!—

"It is useless to *bluster!* Useless to *send* to the American Minister! I am about *to do that myself!*" coldly answered Randolph, as he touched the hall bell for the butler.

When the servant arrived, his eyes, eager with surprise at the disturbing scene of the early morning, Arthur Randolph calmly said. "Jules, if *Madame Orlof* can permit you to leave,—then, take the first carriage and go as quickly as you can to the American Legation. Take young Mr. Peyton this card. You can tell him it is a matter of *life and death* to me! He will understand!—Find him at once, if *he is in Dresden!* I shall *not* leave here!"

Before the butler's foot reached the bottom stair, the Russian Minister cried "Stay! I will see the Minister *myself!*—Call your man *back!*" Irma's knight had won.

"You can handle *your own mouchards!* Let *my man alone!* I will give you the pleasure of apologizing later for this outrage," quietly remarked Randolph. "Mr. Peyton shall have the plain facts before I leave this house!"

And the sound of a key vigorously turned indicated to the baffled Russian official that Mr. Arthur Randolph had private matters to occupy his attention.

There was a grave convocation of physicians and attendants in the invalid's home, as the weary day wore along to the afternoon.—With judicious slyness, Baron Butzow accompanied the retiring Minister, and saw a few important trifles of correspondence borne away by his triumphant underlings! The very serious gravity of First Secretary Peyton's formal bow, on leaving the house impressed the Russian Minister that Arthur Randolph had claimed the fullest protection! Be that as it may, the coming and going of the American artist was thereafter uninterrupted. His later departure in a *closed carriage*, with several paint boxes and artist cases suggested a sketching tour! It was, however, one of very short duration, for in the gloomy salon, on his return, Randolph found Irma clinging to her protectress Countess Olga, in an agony of grief.—

"Have no fear, my dear one!" the generous young painter whispered to the sobbing girl. "*I* am here, and you can surely trust *Countess Olga*, and trust *me* too! *Nothing shall harm you!*" The little Princess of Alaska was sobbing on her fond knight's bosom.

"The papers are divided up and packed in two of my color cases, and are now secure in the vaults of the *Royal Bank!*" Arthur was triumphant as he made this report to the Countess. "I shall stay here continuously, and Peyton will kindly send me a *daily messenger* for any of my little wants. You were simply wonderful in thoughtfulness! How did you ever learn *to act with such adroitness?*"

"Ah! my friend! Life in Russia trains the mind to meet every sudden juncture, *in dissimulation!* The *heart*

may break, but the *face* learns to *wear the mask* of 'Life under the Czar!'"—There were warm tears of gratitude in Olga's eyes, as she pressed the gallant champion's hands: "How shall we ever repay you?" Randolph smiled curiously,—"I can *wait* for my reward, Countess! *Some day,* I may ask you and Princess Beatrice, in happier times,"——"*You shall have anythiug you ask for!*" cried Irma, her girlish voice eager in sympathy. The little Princess of Alaska was dainty and regal, even in her shadowed fortunes!—

"We will see, Rosebud! Wait till *you come into your own inheritance!*" said the artist, as he raised Countess Olga's hand to his lips. Even in her sorrow, the fair lady smiled at Irma's rash promise! "Leave us, Irma!" gently directed the Countess. "Watch over your mother till I come!"

"That child will some day be a rare beauty!" softly said Olga, as the fatherless one left the room. Strangely enough, Arthur Randolph returned for answer the direct question, "And now,—the results? *Tell me the very worst?* We must act *at once,* if Vera's influence can aid to soften this last blow. You dare not personally go to Russia! I *can* not! Princess Beatrice *must* not! Of course, *the child* is safe here,—but, *once over the frontier,* —who can tell what awaits *even her innocence?* Alas! She is the petted little Princess of Alaska *no longer!*"—

"But the Minister evidently was dismayed *by your boldness,*" rejoined the Countess, worn out with the day's excitements. "He only requires Princess Beatrice to remain at home here, subject to his future official requests! For the present, Baron Butzow himself will verify, once a week, her presence. Nothing of importance was taken away!—The Prince's archives were all lost on the vessels, or with his baggage, which last has

certainly been seized. Our original deeds and grants, thank God! *are secure!* They *can not be recalled!*"

"Beatrice answered the few formal questions of the inquisitor with dignified prudence. She *really* knows nothing, and the Minister, who is a gentleman at heart, is evidently convinced of it! Her serious condition of health will prevent her removal for some weeks! But one thing now presses on my mind!—*What shall we do* to help her?"

The young American had finished his careful study of the whole situation.

"I would send Bertha at once, *this very night*, back to St. Petersburg with a full letter to Vera! I will have a carriage ready and—send her to the station two hours before the train. She can mingle there with the crowd and pay her fare only to the frontier! There, she can buy a through Russian ticket! She tells me her passport is all en régle for a return! Let brave Countess Vera appeal directly to the Empress to spare this poor friendless woman the ignominy of being *dragged to Russia* to face her absent husband's judges. Her very sickness, helplessness and approaching poverty is an excuse *in itself* for the Czarina's clemency!"—

When Olga saw the reluctant Bertha drive away, her own sorely tried strength gave way! After standing by the bedside of her gentle friend, to kiss her pale lips a fond good night, the Countess returned to Arthur. He pitied her fatigue and said:

"Now, *your letter is gone!* You need rest! I will sleep with my doors open! The butler too has a couch in the dining room, ready at call! The day of your worst ordeal over! But, God help the poor Princess! The *uncertainty* of her husband's fate, and the *certainty* of the family ruin, will break her proud heart!—Some

monstrous villainy has been secretly wrought! And if these vessels *are wrecked*, or *have been looted*, the Prince, *even if alive*, can never justify his administration. He has lost the Emperor's favor, and so forfeited his well-earned reward!"—

"*It is so, Arthur!* but," cried Olga, with kindling eye, "I will aid and watch over Beatrice! Countess Vera will help me, and my little Stephan," the proud mother added, "shall some day know the debt which hangs over his childhood's cradle!—The unselfish devotion of the Maxutoffs! It is only poor Irma whose future will be clouded! In Russia, this family downfall may seriously affect her,—when she should properly enter society! *Poor little dethroned one!*"—

"It is just possible that *she may not marry a Russian!*" quietly remarked the artist. "I presume, *if you continue to reside here*, she will be educated in the local German schools?"

"True! But my Stephan must be bred in Petersburg, to his high rank and future lofty station! I am in hopes that Vera Orlof's later married rank may give her the power to cover both Irma and myself under her secure station. She is firmly fixed as favorite in the heart of the Czarina! If Irma's rights of succession be preserved, her future might even yet be brilliant!"

Two weeks later, the official notification of Princess Beatrice Maxutoff's release from further inquisition was in due form communicated by the Minister Resident. A formal expression of regret for the invasion of Arthur Randolph's rights was also made further through the American Legation. With artful wisdom, the artist hastened to take up the broken threads of his past acquaintance with the diplomat. The American shielded himself behind the natural surprise of a man in whose land *domiciliary visits* were unknown!—

There was peace and quiet at Dresden, and Randolph's bright face bent daily over his work at his studio. For a letter from Vera Orlof announced the departure for Siberia, via America, of that dangerous enemy of the Dresden circle, Prince Serge Zubow!

"There is *no doubt* of his departure," wrote the Maid of Honor. "He has done his very worst here! In the Privy Council Inquisition, Count Fersen and the Tartar gave evidence as to the two vessels leaving Sitka, improperly guarded, under obscure commanders, and in defiance of *especial orders* from the Emperor, touching the safety of the archives and the rich tribute cargoes!"

"*Hold there, Arthur!*" interrupted Olga, who listened carefully weighing every word. "Those orders *never* reached Prince Gregory! They were *purposely* delayed! Poor Beatrice will *bear me out* in this!"

Randolph pursued his reading:

"An especial war vessel was sent by Count Fersen's order to convoy the cargoes from San Francisco, and the two ships had unwarrantably sailed before the arrival of the needful guard-ship! Zubow has been specially charged with a final examination of and report on the whole mystery of this disappearance of millions, and the unravelling of the alleged villainies, for the Government detectives have found the richest furs, with the especial *Imperial Household Tribute* mark on, crowding the markets of London, Leipzig and Amsterdam!"

"It is openly charged by Count Fersen, that Prince Maxutoff, with some skilled American accomplices, ran the cargoes into obscure United States ports, and has also destroyed the Government archives to cover his peculations! There is *no one* here to battle for him! Our Irma has only us to guard her *now!* The Russian-

American Fur Company also boldly demand huge sums from the Czar, and bring up some startling accounts!—Of course, *these* can have been made up in the absence of the lost records. The capital and Court are in a wild ferment, and a formal demand has been made on the American Government for duplicate papers of the details of the transfer—Prince Serge Zubow has been placed in charge of the whole case, taking out instructions to the Russian Minister at Washington; and Phillippi *goes with him!* Fersen remains here to conduct the Government's case. Now, I am told by Milutin, that Prince Gregory Maxutoff has been degraded as a *common private soldier,* and sentenced to serve in the 'Punishment Battalion' at Khiva! No home communication is allowed there,—and they are *shot like dogs* at the slightest infraction! An Imperial Courier told my trusted *one* in the Caucasus that he had himself seen the ruined noble! After a long study of all, I have decided to appeal to the good Empress next week! I shall tell her the *whole story* of Beatrice's noble kindness to you, and beg her to shield the Princess and Irma!—I fear, I shudder, to press for poor Prince Gregory's *pardon!* He has been stricken from every roll of honor,—I must wait and try to have the *one,* I do not dare to name, endeavor to send a Circassian on to Khiva and open a secret communication! *But the family seems doomed!*"——

"Prince Maxutoff has been summarily condemned to perpetual degradation,——only the *Emperor's Sign Manual* could pardon him!—The Czar has even forbidden his name to be mentioned! He was in a towering rage when it was proposed to produce Maxutoff to *face* his many accusers! This I learned from Prince Gortschakoff's daughter!—Hope and pray for my success with the Empress! I will send Bertha back with a report of

my success! I dare not trust *that* to friendly hands, like *this* note, My heart *goes out to you.* I forgot to say that Phillippi has obtained the great Russian fur contracts."——

"Countess Olga!" said Randolph, "*the last clause* tells the whole secret story! Fersen, Zubow and Phillippi corruptly control this huge fur venture! They must have American associates. Through them, the fur cargoes stolen were, piecemeal, sent on to Europe! The missing ships have been *stolen,* the archives *destroyed,* and Maxutoff, who would have been in charge of all this, has been made a *scapegoat!*—It was necessary to get him *out of the way!*"

Arthur sprang to Countess Olga's side, for her face was ashen.

"Ah! my God!" *You pierce my heart!* I see the villainy of years! Zubow was only Fersen's spy! *And they murdered my noble husband!*——My Fedor!"

The loving widow saw the truth at last!

While at Dresden, Butzow, Randolph and the Countess Olga waited, with aching hearts, for the news of brave Vera's appeal to the Czarina's heart, the daring girl, in maiden single-heartedness, plied the gentle arts of her dainty charms upon the stately Czarina!

It was with a beating heart that Vera Orlof, in the lovely gardens of Peterhof, threw herself down before the Imperial Lady, as they watched together the blue glimpses of the Gulf of Finland through the trembling trees.—The fragrance of the roses was wafted by the breezes, bearing the plash of the diamond waters of the marble cascade!

Keenly watching the moment when the Czarina yielded in spirit to the tenderness brought by Russia's warmly wooing summer days, the beautiful supplicant,

in broken words, implored the aid of the First Lady of all the land!——

"*Rise, my child!* It can be *no* great secret of state which racks *your young heart!* You wear no crown!" the stately Empress sighed. "A favor! My help! Do you wish some *one particular* brave young officer ordered *back to Court?* Is *that* the weighty business?"

The Czarina was moved, for no telltale blushes of affection dyed the lovely Maid of Honor's cheeks!

With eager flowing words, her fringed lashes trembling with tears, the pearl of the Orlofs spoke to the woman heart of the mighty one! The Czarina's brow was very grave, as she stroked the girl's silken hair.

"*My Vera!* You will please bid the equerry in waiting bring me *the best bouquet* he can find for you! Let me think alone over your request! I will have your answer, when *you* bring back *my roses!*"

The girl, with beating heart, watched the stately Czarina, on her return, in an agony of suspense.

The Empress' eyes were gazing far away in their fixed glances! It was not the silver sails flecking the sapphire Gulf of Finland she saw.—It was a picture of lonely Baranoff castle in the far distant Arctic!—For with girlish eloquence, Vera had told all the story of her kinswoman's sad life at Sitka and—of the generous friendship of the now ruined Maxutoff's!—

At a sign, the maiden knelt before her royal mistress.

"Here, Vera," the Empress said, with an affectionate glance, "I can only promise Princess Maxutoff that *she shall be unmolested,*——that *her estates, her child's rights,*——*their rank,*——shall be inviolate! Let her write *to you* any future wishes that I am able to grant! Give her *this ring* as a pledge of *my* own sympathy! The concession and patents of lands will stand good to

her and to little Irma! But, *alas, I dare not* even mention her husband's name to the Emperor! I can name the Princess however as one of my 'Ladies in Waiting!'—To be 'on the list' will be a safeguard! Irma Maxutoff shall be named, *at once* as my special charge, in the Catherine Institute. *There,* I can protect her against *all human* interference! It is my *sole* prerogative! Let Madame Maxutoff remain patiently at Dresden until the future will throw, perhaps, a new light on the mystery! It is almost incredible that a web of crime has been woven around the Prince as an innocent man,——yet——yet——how little we know! You can write in my name to Countess Olga Orlof that *her noble devotion* to her *benefactor* shall seal the future of little Stephan! *It is a sad romance!* I shall have inquiry made into the matter of these patents you speak of, and instructions given! Now, my child, *are you satisfied?* You can write through my own secretary's signet to the Minister at Dresden!"

The sunshine breaking through the bending foliage of the exquisite garden park seemed brighter to the kindly but careworn Czarina, when she drank in the impassioned devotion of the grateful girl's eyes.—Her rosy lips pressed kiss after kiss on the hand only raised in kindness. And the mother of the State, with her bright-eyed girl-adjutant walked back in chastened silence, to the palace where the golden facade letters blazoned the fane of mighty Peter. A human touch of love and tenderness knitted the haughty mistress and ardent little maiden even more closely together in the secret of a Czarina's pledge of honor! And once again, Fortune smiled upon the helpless waif borne on in Life's storm, cherished and loved as *Little Irma, the Princess of*

Alaska! The gleaming of the phantom coronet shone again through the dark clouds around!—

A week later, in the salon where he had unwillingly performed his most unpleasant duty of executing an Imperial '*search warrant*,' the Russian Minister to Saxony, *in his own person*, delivered to the Princess Beatrice Maxutoff a sealed letter bearing the seal of the Private Secretary of the Czarina of Russia! The functionary's face glowed with pride, as he handed the silent sufferer the document, and his full dress and gala decorations indicated an important visit of ceremony! Baron Butzow was overjoyed at the sudden turn of official intercourse!

"I am happy to add, Madame la Princesse, that I have also received instructions from the Private Secretary of Her Imperial Majesty to inform you that your new appointment as '*Lady in Waiting*' gives you the right to address the Czarina directly! I shall be pleased to visa your passports for any home visits you may wish to make, and in all other things to render your residence here safe, agreeable, and to aid you in any way properly in my power!"

After the official had departed, Beatrice raised her eyes from the letters.

"The Czarina's kindness is truly noble! Yet, I am heart-broken, Olga, *for Gregory's fate is sealed!* My husband! *My lover!* And our depleted estates, even if we retain them, will be lost to me! I am *practically ruined!* The lands can *not* be sold till Irma is of age! Her social future is to be secured,—*and I am now penniless!*"

"*I* am not!" cried Olga Orlof! "I never knew *till now* the blessed power of my well guarded patrimony! My dear one! My White Rose! *I have eaten your bread and salt!* You *need* not,—you *shall* not,—look forward!

Do you remember my promise in old Baranoff's halls? Vera will steal Stephan from me to ride at the head of the Orlofs,—and your Irma shall have *two mothers!* We will bide our time together! We must face the future, and trust to the winning witch,—Vera!"

And so the white wings of peace brooded over them, and in the months while Nature slowly asserted its blessed magic of heart healing, Arthur Randolph labored on that famous picture of Countess Olga which glowed upon his canvas, the incarnation of his virgin genius! Irma, standing by the impassioned artist, knew not that the delicate philtre of the wine of life, quickening her own placid veins, was giving to her shy beauty the exquisite glow of virginal youth and innocence! The Princess of Alaska was dowered with a delicate beauty of her own! Was it a wonder that the poet painter found the unawakened vestal wondrous fair? The Czar could not bid the rose of innocence depart from her girlish face!—

The settled melancholy of Beatrice Maxutoff was the only cloud resting now on the Dresden menage. In vain did the triumphant Vera Orlof cheer Madame Maxutoff with her hopeful letters.—The year to elapse before the finishing of the final report of Count Fersen and Prince Zubow on the disaster of the two fur ships would be only one long agony for loving Beatrice!

"To see his *dear face,* to hear his *beloved voice,* even were we *homeless peasants on Volga's banks,* would be to me a heaven on earth! And *where* does he linger? In *what* misery? Each throb of his lonely heart is echoed *in my own!*" —

But one ray of sunshine pierced the lowering clouds of sorrow.—

Countess Olga was radiant when she read a sparkling

note of happy rejoicing from that dainty plaything of an Empress, Vera Orlof.

"*He* is coming! His two years of dashing service in the Caucasus have won him a promotion to *Lieutenant Colonel*, and a transfer to the diplomatic service as Military Attache! The Empress herself asked his recall, and he goes *first* to Berlin, *then* later to London! I shall see him *in two weeks!* *You* shall see him too! And as the Czarina has given her consent on my Palace life ending, I can tell you *now*, darling Olga, that Prince Charming's name is Dimitri Narychkine! He will aid us in searching out poor Prince Maxutoff's place of interment, for he will be able to have direct relations through the Foreign Office! I shall insist on his doing this! And Dimitri is *already* warmly interested!"

"I am not to be married for *two* years! Until he has earned his next promotion, in the new career! He will have a very powerful influence soon! Even the Empress said to me: 'He must be *made a Minister* before you marry! Do you know, my little Vera, that Natalie Narychkine, a direct ancestress of your lover, was the mother of Peter the Great! That her haughty pride and mental energy led him on to success, and that *her* counsels have shaped Russia's destiny! It was *she* who married the wild boy Czar to a Lapouchkine, and drew the great families of *old Russia* around the throne! Your Dimitri has thus a claim upon the Czar cemented by blood! And to *you*, an Orlof, is due the meed of gratitude for your ancestor fostering great Catherine II's genius! *You* and *he* can be trusted in our high affairs! But, my little Maid of Honor shall learn dignity before it is thrust upon her!' Now, my Olga, when you have seen Dimitri, you will know why *I love him*, and am the *happiest girl in Russia!*"——

"This will be a great pillar of strength for your little man's future, this high alliance!" mused Arthur. "I wonder where we will all be *in ten years!* Stephan, I know, will be the most dashing Imperial Page and Cadet of the Garde à Cheval, imaginable! I will not dare to say I hope to be a great artist!"

"I *know* that you will be!" cried Olga, warmly.

Randolph continued: "I feel that your return to St. Petersburg must follow the emergence of our chrysalis Vera into a grande dame!"

"I fear," he sighed, "that the slender cord of Princess Maxutoff's life will soon snap under the certainty of the fate I fear for the Prince! Never forget, dear Countess, that I regard the Alaskan grants as a great future property for *you*, your *child* and for *Irma!* If she should be left by her mother to you,—remember, you *must* claim from the United States the confirmed grants! I have examined the papers carefully with Baron Butzow! They clearly take precedence of *any* American disposition of these lands,"——

"I do not forget, Arthur," replied the listener, "My dear Fedor *died to save that heritage* for the Governor General, and for *our* child! It has led to Maxutoff's quarrel with Zubow, and later to his ruin! Dearly bought, it shall be *hard held!* For, as soon as Vera *Orlof* is Vera *Narychkine*,—when, as Minister, *he* can have weight at the Foreign Office, I shall claim for *Stephan* and *myself* the possession of the lands through the Russian Minister at Washington!"——

"You are right as to *Irma!* Beloved child! I fear these future interests may be her greatest inheritance. She shall live yet to be the golden Princess of Alaska! We *must* save her rights! For the hopes of claiming pension, arrearages and all official dues of her father are

lost in the destruction of the archives. She must not want!"

Olga's eyes were very tender, and the shadowy past rushed on her mind, with its record of Maxutoff's unselfish devotion.

"She shall not be a prey to bitter fortune while *I draw breath!*"—vigorously protested Randolph, who suddenly reddened and sought his studio when fair Olga's blue eyes sought the reason of his peculiar vehemence! In his heart, he had sworn the fealty of the coming years to the shy girl beauty,—*the Princess of Alaska!*

"Ah!" thought the lady, "the roses every season bring a *deeper* dye to Irma's cheek; the sunlight a *richer* tint to her golden hair! In these young natures, the subtle mysterious call of Love's magical voice awakens a new music daily in their fresh young hearts! I can trust to the happy future, to the kindly fates to shield this nestling of my heart! Even a struggling artist can have his guarded palace of Truth, where there is but *one* sweet girlish voice to whisper: "*Open Sesame! It is I*"——

Beautiful Olga Orlof, lighter at heart, with a meaning smile, watched the frank association of the painter and his gentle sprite, the Ariel of the studio!——

—"Gentlemen! You must not linger here in Washington!" said the Senator, as he rose at the conclusion of a last confidential interview with Phillippi and the blunt Tartar Chief Prince Zubow!——

It was in August, 1870, and the fashionable world had deserted the shimmering, sweltering stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue. Only "necessary business" was transacted at the languid Departments,—half of whose ambitionless hirelings were now on leave.—The feebly guarded Treasury, now baked in the glare of a vertical

sun, was tenanted only by listless clerks, furtive claim agents and never tiring, prowling lobbyists!——

The Senator's hospitalities to his associates were sumptuous, and justified the selection of the Chesapeake Bay and the rich Potomac as the happy *feeding ground* of the pre-Revolutionary aristocrats! All their sly faces were beaming around the splendid board where Paul Bradford's gray eye gleamed wolfishly as future *millions* were discussed! With a creamy glass of Veuve Cliquôt raised in air, the statesman, in the privacy of the special dining room, drank gaily: "*To our association!* There is nothing to do now but to *reap the harvest!* Our friends, on August 3d, obtained a twenty years' lease which makes them the *Kings of the Arctic* until 1890! *You* have presented the *other side of the medal* to the gracious Czar, and the same two decades of monopoly in Russian waters will bring us together as the Fur Kings of the world! Let us *not* forget that low envy might trace our footsteps! The *sooner you* possess yourself of the Komandorski group, *the better*, for my young friend Bradford here sails on a Revenue Cutter in two weeks from San Francisco, on an important *Government trust* in Alaska! To prove to you that Yankees never sleep, I dispatched our San Francisco manager the moment that I saw the seal and signature, dated August 3, 1870, affixed to our contract! Before I sat down with you I had the brief words: 'Steamer Bonanza sails *to-night* for the Prybiloffs.' There is nothing left for us to do, my friends, but to *drink the health of the Czar!* of the *President*, and to go our ways,—to reap a sure harvest from a judicious *golden silence!*"—

"I think our interests will bind us strictly *together!* No man will *rob himself!*" laughed Phillippi. "This

thing is after all only an *international grab-bag*, in which *we alone* get all the prizes! And there is *enough for all!*"

"Your idea is a *good one*, Excellency!" growled the saturnine Zubow.

"I leave *to-morrow!*"

"Good!" echoed Phillippi. "I can tell my backers, the Rothschilds, that *I have seen* the United States' Great Seals upon the compact! I take the first Cunarder to London! You must *not recognize me*, Prince, if we meet on the railway, or in California! Remember that fellow McMann and his pirate associates will continually watch us all!"—

"Yes;—he is a *dangerous scoundrel!*" calmly added the Senator, a scoundrel *himself*, not "dangerous" in the frontier sense, but far *more deadly* in his resentment than *the whaler!*—

"I will move a war vessel and several Revenue Cutters at once into the Arctic, and every fur and bit of valuable trade will drift into our coffers!—I must see the President *to-morrow!* The prowlers must be taught to *respect the national flag!*" Bradford was obliged to smile at the *haughty tone of public spirit* with which the lordly Senator invoked the *cheaply used flag* to screen the *private scheme of infamy* he had helped to push through!—

As the statesman and his journalistic henchman followed the returning Muscovite guests, at a safe distance, Bradford whispered: "I am glad you *hastened their departure!* The 'Newspaper Row' men here are keen nosed, sharp fanged and *hungry!*"—

"Yes, it is just as well! I detest public *scandal!*" remarked the Senator, slipping on his invisible toga with a halo attached, and as austere in his manner as a society messalina, speaking of the last poor ballet dancer led astray! "There is entirely *too much* intrusion

on public men in our 'go-as-you-please' country!" The grave and reverend seignior himself lived behind a stucco mask of *public* virtues and *conventional* morality! Rich, sleek, quiet, judicious and powerful, 'he moved in a mysterious way,—his wonders to perform!' A harrowing tale *once* drifted to the Pacific coast that his prim face had been seen by accident where popping corks, the gleam of gold, the bizarre manoeuvres of the "game," the suspicious rustle of *dearly bought robes* and the parthian glances of laughing eyes, told of the rosy realms of *Bacchus* and *Venus!* A sober public, reading his last moral speech, refused to think that *the senatorial feet could be made of clay*,—that they could ever *wander*—"There is *much, in decorum*, and a judicious *avoidance of publicity*,"—remarked the Senator, when this unholy lampoon reached him!—"My character is *proof*, however, against attack!" *It was even so!* And, behind the varnish and veneer of American political greatness, *the real man safely lurked*,—dallying with his pet vices,—at heart, *sensual, base, coarse, the very triumph of vulgar mediocrity!* His peccadilloes were *safe* with his chosen associates of the Senate! It was high time that wealth bubbled around them in a golden flood!—That sybaritic feasts waited them!—That provokingly pretty women played the willing *Egeria* to these amiable sages! Ah! Arcana imperii! Hidden under the laces of snowy bosoms, these State secrets were never divulged to the 'outsider!' Silence,—*golden* silence!——The Statesman's motto!—

"Now, my boy, *you have all your orders! I* have a private appointment!" The Senator softly smiled. "Come over to my rooms at midnight! You will then get the map and sketches which Zubow gave to me! I will have your ten thousand dollars ready there *in currency!*

As you take the morning train, all you have to do is to telegraph me when you will sail! And keep my agent Herron informed of all! He will give you a cipher which *any one* of the Fur Company's *trusted* agents can read! Eben Tomlinson takes sole charge for *our fur associates* at San Francisco, and Sitka, as well as at the Prybiloffs, our vital point! *On your life*, never let *them* know of this private dividend of mine! If you meet McMann up in the Arctic, keep him *away* from Golden Island! Your own fortune depends on baffling this brute —McMann's curiosity! He evidently has tricked you! I have sent out a confidential hint to the Captain of the Revenue Cutter that *his advancement* depends on backing *you up blindly!* If the mysterious claimant, *the dangerous 'French Pete'* ever appears, detain him up there by force! I ask *no details of you*, Paul, only solid results! Your journalistic work this season *has been royal!* It has fixed the *'paternalism of our Alaskan policy'* firmly in the mind of every good tax-payer and voter! Now, I have safely sealed up in a vault here a copy of Zubow's map and sketch! *One other* is in the Sub-Treasury at New York, in my own sealed strong box! Should any trouble occur, destroy your own set of *private* documents, for *I* can replace them!"—A *prudent* Senator!

Bradford was now ready for the seven days' jaunt over the rough Pacific Railroad, where the buffalo still roamed by tens of thousands, when the joyous Senator met him at midnight!—He was radiant!

"*There you are*, my boy," cried the capitalist statesman.—"I have one thing only *to live for*, that is *to see the patent issued to me for these gold lands!* Do not spare any expense to hasten on *your official papers*, *the survey maps*, *entries* and *your reports to me*, through Herron! The Revenue Cutter has *my orders* to bring your reports at

once down to San Francisco! The Collector at San Francisco owes to me this return *for special favors*, for he is also *a fur associate!*—Make no mistake! I intend to put machinery worth a half million dollars on this great mine. I have just received the secret report of the Assistant Secretary of State. It appears that the possession was given and the seven millions in gold were paid on a *mere interchange of notes* between Secretary Seward and Baron Stoeckl, the Russian Minister, in 1867,—why, I know not, for the solemn treaty was *only ratified this year*, and bears the legal date of *March 30, 1870!* Now, in this, is a clause providing that any proper claims shall be equitably settled, and that all land grants made heretofore, under the great seal of Russia, to private parties, shall hold good! *There are none*, I am told! None as yet on file!—The Russian-American Fur Company's old charter is annulled, and the realty all thrown back in block, to the United States! There is no danger of conflict! Make the locations *correctly*, and *the Golden Island is mine!* There is nothing to fear!"

"But, I shall not leave the East until I have the patents, *in my pocket!* You must hold on to the island with your life! I have already sent the collector a positive request to have five armed sailors landed to protect *you* as a Government officer! You know what they are really for!—*Only to hold our island!* As soon as you hear that I have made the entries here and obtained the patents, you will come down at once to San Francisco, on the Revenue Cutter's return trip. I will have instructions for you from the Secretary of the Interior."

The sly old modern Midas laughed.

"I will meet you there! Yes! Paul, the Island is

mine! When I *get my claws* on a good bit of property, there I cling, hooked like an eagle!"

"Now, 'Good-night!' Spare nothing to give me the news I desire! Our future meeting there at San Francisco will then, see you raised above any frown of Fortune! Herron will send up a brave and skilled frontier miner with you, to *technically* examine! Above all, let *no one*, land on the island until you know that *my title* is impregnable! You will have my despatch! Herron will send ten men then who will hold it against all comers! If *no one has been before us*,—we have a prize of untold value! The golden steps to our princely fortunes! Not a human being is to enter an acre of land in Alaska, but this one survey! When you are done your jollification at San Francisco, you can return and leisurely open your *real* official headquarters at Sitka."

"By that time, we can defy *the President himself! The island is mine!* There is not a shadow on this golden fortune!"

The stars shone down at Dresden on a loyal hearted guardian of the little Princess of Alaska, who dreamed, as he mixed his colors and bent over his easel, of the happy future day when, free to claim her rights under a patent, never to be revoked, gentle Irma Maxutoff would come unto her own!

"They *shall not rob her!* But first,—*first*,—to *save her gallant father!*"

And generously, Arthur Randolph poured out the tenderness of his nature upon the gentle child whose love untroubled bosom knew the sighs *only* of a daughter's sorrows!—

The magic sceptre of Love waited to sweep in disturbing witchery over the unquickened heart of the Princess of Snows!

Two weeks later, the Revenue Cutter, "Panther," steamed out of the harbor of San Francisco on a misty afternoon. The cold gray wreaths hid lofty Tamalpais, and veiled old Monte Diablo. As the sturdy Captain sprang to his station and rang to the engine room, at the gangway, Paul Bradford exchanged a few earnest words with Herron and Tomlinson. The heavy revenue steamer forged ahead slowly as she rounded North Point, her vertical striped flag, with its blue eagle and thirteen stars streaming out proudly! A light hawser drew a puffing tug along in the choppy green water!

"Remember,—all our fortunes depend on *your judgment* and fidelity, Bradford," was Herron's brief adieu.

"I know it! *My own,* also! Trust my devotion!" said the lynx-eyed emissary. He burned to be away on the high seas!

Smiling, smooth Eben Tomlinson murmured a last confidence, as the tug whistled. He was already the invisible despot of the unorganized purchased realm!

"You can always count on us! It is really *all the same* pocket!" grinned Tomlinson, ignorant that *even now* his Senatorial partner was robbing his nefarious associates!

Out on the breaking waters of the bar, the strong steamer steadily moved, her decks cumbered with the camping supplies and freight of the mighty Senator's secret expedition. The gray wet fog soon drove Bradford from the deck. For the steamer's prow was headed for Golden Island, the unreaped scattered harvest of centuries.

"That's it! *Take a turn in!* I'll land you safely at Tako Inlet in four days!" cried the jolly captain, as Paul saw the Golden Gate slowly vanish, hidden in the clinging mantle of the Gray Friar!——

"All is safe for a straight run, *now!*" thougnt Bradford, as he closed his eyes! "Nothing can rob me of my fortune! It is *too late* for that sly devil, the Senator, to trust any one else!"

The secret papers were securely sewed in the journalist's coat lining.

"Was I dreaming? or did the engines *stop?*" asked Paul when, six hours later, he found the Captain settling down to his quarter deck stride. The stars were sweeping over them, and the "Panther" sped along on the open sea! The bar and its rollers lay fifty miles astern! Paul joined the commander in his promenade and evening cigar.—

"Yes! We slowed up, and picked up a poor devil of a castaway, clinging to a broken spar. We found him drifting away with the in shore current as we passed the Farallones. He was nearly dead from cold! The stewards gave him a rubbing and some hot grog, and he is now sleeping in one of the firemen's bunks. *He had a mighty close call!*"———

"What will you *do* with him?" said the journalist. "Oh! The Government gives *us* revenue men a sort of general discretion in such matters! He can mess around with the sailors! I'll either turn him loose at San Francisco, or let him go ashore and become one of the First Citizens of *your* New Territory!" In the laughing colloquy the waif of the sea was soon forgotten.——

In four days, Paul Bradford's heart began to flutter with a strange excitement. He stood at Fortunes gates! —The stern, silent coast line of Alaska now loomed up, before his eager eyes, and every turn of the screw swept him on to the frontier of the dream of years!——

"Can it be only some colossal humbug?—a mere fancy?—this Treasure Island!" thought Bradford, as the

well-remembered crags met his eye once more. Mount Edgecumbe, lifting aloft its warder peak, glittered before him! "I will know the worst or best, very *soon!*" mused Bradford, as he marshalled his secret party the night before Dome Peak marked the entrance of Lynn Canal, and the termination of the quest! On the "Panther" the bustle of preparation for landing busied the whole crew.—A grand jollification of the *mess room* signalized the quick run, and Bradford, who had watched all day the superb panorama of the Fairweather mountains, joined heartily in the officers' merriment! His subordinates were all ready to carry out Herron's secret orders, and a dozen more skillful prospectors *never emptied a demijohn!*——

In the fairy moonlight, Scidmore Island dreamed upon deep starlit seas, the mighty hills sleeping around the exquisite bay like couchant lions. On the decks, the sailors, with fiddle and horse play, amused themselves. As the anxious captain left the deck to his executive, he quietly said to Bradford: "I'll have *you at anchor*, and the steam launch ready at daybreak, to land *your* party! By the way, as you will camp and need help, take along that poor devil we picked up! He seems half starved, even half-witted!— The sailors all torment him, and he *may* be of some use to *you.* He seems to be a *a foreigner,* and no one can get him to talk or tell how he got into the grip of the currents of the Farallones."

Long after the cabin merriment was over, Bradford paced the deck in secret excitement. The anchor rattled down at midnight, and before them, the wild bluffs of the Tako region frowned in the still night! Paul tossed in his cabin restlessly till the crimson dawn roused him *to action!*—

Warned by wary Herron to trust *no one* with the object

of his quest,—Bradford was on deck at daybreak, alert and eagerly waiting till the fog of dawn should roll away. The light glimmered down the dark ridges of Juneau, now black with silvery snow wreaths filling their deep crevices!——

Paul could not resist an exclamation of delight, for there before him, lay '*the high green island,*' sheltered in its triangular channels! His heart beat high as he compared the outlines and the bearings with his treasured *secret* sketch!

"I must be placed a mile or so farther down to verify *these bearings and angles!*"—he mused. "Yet, it *is a wonderfully accurate piece of work!*"—

Rolling gray and yellow rock ledges breasted the sloping knolls of the island and olive green masses of stunted pines clung to the sheltered hollows and drifted soil thrown down in past ages.—

"There can be *no mistake!*—The Russian's topography *does not lie!*—Now, is the *hidden golden treasure* a fool's story? I shall know the truth soon"—he cried.——

"I am at your orders!" cheerily cried the captain, as he called Bradford to the delights of morning coffee and a Government breakfast.

"It is very strange, Bradford, but there is *a whaler* lying down in the bay a couple of miles below the island. I don't see what these fellows have to do *in here!* They may be trading illicit *rum* with the natives for furs! The fellow, however, is a fool!—If a sudden blow came on, he would be thrown ashore and his ship broken up! The main coast is very rough! I'll send the launch over after I land you, and soon find out what *he* is doing here!"——

Paul Bradford's eyes gleamed with a strange fire.

"*A whaler?*—Could there be *some secret* expedition to

probe the coast in search of the long talked of gold fields of the Indians?"

"You can land me with *my party* now as soon as you wish! I will take half the men, look over the island and get a general view of the topography from its summit. You can send the launch back at sundown to our landing point. If I find good wood, water and shelter, I will choose a camp and make the mouth of the Tako the initial point for *my land maps!* We can see Dome Peak for fifty miles along the coast."

"Good! But you had better have your men *armed!*" said the captain, "these fierce brown bears, (larger than grizzlies), often swim these narrow fiords in search of the smaller animals crowding the islands!"—

Half an hour later, as Bradford, his private preparations done, stepped on board the launch, a group of sailors were tormenting the rescued castaway who now made frantic efforts *to reach the boat!*

"Let the poor devil *go along!* He can carry something! He seems so *eager* to land!"

And in truth the worn frame of the stranger, a straggling gray beard, restless, wolfish eyes, and a strange torrent of mingled dialects, gave a weird appearance to the struggling man, clad now in cast-off sailor's garb!—With singularly eager gesticulation, he *urged the boat on,* as the launch swept toward the point designated for landing!—

"There's a boat *going back* to the whaler, sir," cried a quarter-master touching his hat, as he addressed the boat officer.

"Looking for fresh water, I suppose," carelessly answered the Lieutenant in charge. "That main land is very dangerous for landing parties!"

When the launch grazed the gravelly beach, Bradford

was astonished to see the wanderer of the sea, *the very first* to leap out, and *disappear* with the swiftness of a beast *seeking cover* in the low bushes!

"Some one of you had better *look after him* by and by! *Singular man!*"—was Bradford's remark, as he sprang on shore and ran to the point to gain his first view of the inner canal, with its distant cliff shores. There, in full sight, a deeply laden whaler rested on the tranquil waters, her sides lined with boats crowding the davits!—

"What can they *mean?*" the explorer reflected, as, pistol in hand, he climbed the five hundred foot peak of the island.

It was a beautiful scene:—the silent sylvan reaches of the low shores, the abrupt cliffs of the Tako, the triangular blue sparkling water boundaries, and far gloomy Dome Peak rising heavenwards in giant bulk.

"This *is the very place!*" Bradford whispered under his breath, as he took out his map, when he had stationed a guard to watch his labors, and dispersed the party to generally explore the mile long quartzose rocky island, which was the very spot of Zubow's careful sketching. Suddenly, Bradford dropped his glass.

"Here, Raymond, you wait ready! I see something! Give *me* your rifle!"

Handing the astonished prospector *his pistol*, Paul Bradford, with springy step, swiftly strode down the sloping sides of a hollow which his glasses had explored!

"I suppose it is only some deer that has crossed the strait!" thought the miner, as he quietly "interviewed" his pocket flask. But Bradford's heart was filled with a sudden rage! A man was quietly busied *at work* in the very canon he descended! Something *shone* in his hands as he bent over a water pool!—

"By Heavens! It is a man *at work, washing gold out,*

with a pan! He shall *not* leave this island! *I see the trick!* This fellow has been landed *from the whaler!*" —

Paul's heart was filled with blackest thoughts as he neared the man whose back was towards him! He was carefully peering down into the shining blue *iron pan* in his hands! There was here *another* possessor of the great secret! Another man who coveted *that treasure* for which the claws of Midas were now stretched out from far Washington! With a sudden start, the man turned and faced Bradford, who came leaping down the hillside.

"*Good God!*" cried Paul, "McMann! what are *you* doing here? *What business* have you *on this island?*"

Bradford was enlightened at last! McMann *had duped him* and *stolen* the secret! The rough sailor glanced anxiously at Bradford's ready rifle! He was *unarmed*, save for his sailor's sheath knife! And the gold washer's pan lay where it had been dropped *at his feet!*—

"I have *as much business here as you!*" roughly replied the burly mate, springing forward to grapple the newcomer!—

"*Not another step!*" cried Bradford, throwing up his cocked rifle!—"You will *answer to me* for this!"

And with a wild halloo, he loudly called his men, who came quickly scrambling down the hill! The sentinel had already warned his fellows, who hastened to Bradford's aid, mindful of the Captain's lurking "*bears!*" —

"Men! Secure *this trespasser!* He must *not* leave the island!"

"*I'll see about that!*" yelled McMann! "I have *sixty men* on my ship *here*, and I'll *pitch you into Lynn Canal!* I have as much right to *a claim here* as *you* have! This is now *free for all!*——

"I have a *Revenue Cutter* here with *a hundred men* and

her guns, and I will *sink your damned whaler,* if you resist! Don't be a *fool* as well as a black-hearted liar, McMann! —You *stole* the Frenchman away from me and so *robbed me!* But you are *at the end of your rope now!*—Do you *surrender?* If you do *not,* I will give the order to *shoot* and cripple you!"

Bradford was white with rage. McMann's villainy was *unmasked* at last!

"*Throw down that knife—quick!*" Paul ordered.

And Aleck McMann, still *stubborn* and *defiant,* waited till the guns were *cocked* before he finally cast the glittering blade down upon the moss! —

"Here! Take him *over there out of sight of the water!*" ordered Bradford, who called up his secret associate, Herron's most trusted desperado! "I wish to *capture* his boat's crew also when *they come back!* Then, the Revenue Cutter can *escort* this whaler to Sitka, for *illegal rum trading with the natives!* But, *what shall we do with this fellow,* Raymond? *He knows too much!*"——

"Let us think it over a bit!" Raymond said.—

There was *a dark suggestion* in his tone!—McMann had thrown his huge bulk sullenly down on the soft moss. His two guards, at a few paces distance, leisurely watched him, as they lounged, pistol in hand. The silence was only broken by the scream of a soaring sea bird and the trickle of water in the runlet. While Paul, in an ominous colloquy, was busied with Raymond, the guards did not notice the gaunt figure of the shipwrecked man, who stealthily appoached from the coppice!—His tread was light as a leopard's,—suddenly *he caught sight of McMann,* as he lay at ease! Stooping, the unknown slyly picked up *something which glittered,* as he sprang forward, with the inarticulate cry of a beast! The aroused mate was on his feet *too late,—one fatal moment* too late,—for

with the howl of a madman, the stranger plunged the knife he had found, again and again, *into the whaler* as he fell, with an oath upon his lips! The watchers quickly tore the frenzied assailant from his prey, and Bradford, with Raymond, came rushing up to aid!—

"What is this? *Who did this?*" yelled Paul, as he saw the mate's huge prostrate frame quiver in the approaching agonies of death!

The dying sailor beckoned to Bradford who bent and leaned over him!—His eyes were already glazed. He gasped,—

"How did *he get away? I put him on the Farallones?* Who *betrayed* me?"

Bradford was astonished!—He looked at the struggling maniac!—

"We picked him up *at sea*, floating on a log. *Who is he?*"

The Senator's man of all work was in a dream!—

"Fool! *That is 'French Pete!'*—the man I *stole away from you!* Ah-h!" with a sickening leer of triumph, McMann's face relaxed as he fell back,—*dead!*—

Bradford strode forward and picked up the gravel washing pan which the dead whaler had dropped!—Its concave was *filled with grain gold* and *black sand!*—

"Saved by a *Madman!* The island is *mine* now!" cried Paul Bradford. "The story *was* true!"——

And only the screaming sea birds wailed the requiem of the dead pirate of the North!—

CHAPTER XII.

A SATISFACTORY SURVEY—AN ALARMED STATESMAN—FRENCH PETE'S TITLE—"WHO ARE THE OTHERS?"—AN ARCTIC GOLD PLACER—VERA ORLOF'S PROMOTION!—"HE SHALL BE SAVED!"—THE PRINCESS OF ALASKA ON THE NEVA—THE YOUNG CHIEF OF THE ORLOFS!

"This *is* an awkward business, Bradford! We must act at once! Those wild whaling boatmen may soon return *heavily armed!*"——

Raymond gazed at the stiffening form of McMann. The air was vocal with the yells and shouts of the infuriated murderer. Bradford spoke, as he turned from hiding the Russian iron pan with its golden witness of the mine, *in a clump of bushes!*

"You are right! There is no law in the Arctic! *Here!* boys, drag this man's body *in under this vine!*—Now, *let us all cross to the other side of the island!* Tie up that fellow's arms! *Search him first!*—Picking up the knife with which "French Pete" had revenged his own brutal captivity on the Farallones, Paul Bradford closed up the rear guard, with Raymond!—His brain was in a whirl!—But his fears urged him to action!——

"We will *build a signal fire,* and firing all our guns in a volley, bring the launch back *at once* from the ship! Then, as the Captain is the ranking United States' officer here, he can take all our affidavits and enter these facts properly in the ship's log! To prevent any revenge or future fracas, he can *order* the whaler to put to sea! It was a murder by pure *accident!*—We will land our own whaleboat *with a guard now,* as I wish to send th- -teamer

at once *back to California*, as soon as I can run off a *triangulation* of the island! Now, take my glasses and *stay here* on the summit, Raymond!" concluded the victorious Bradford.

"If you *see any boat* approaching from the whaler, join us *at once*, as soon as they near the island! I wish to run around there with the launch, *capture them* and properly explain the man's death!"——

"All right, Bradford," answered Raymond, coolly. "*A dead man, more or less*, makes *no difference!* There will be *many a man killed here*, before this rock *gives up all its gold!* It is *good luck* to a mining camp to have an *early blood christening!*"——

In ten minutes, the steam launch crowded with anxious men, was seen swiftly steaming down the western channel from the "Panther," which had already fired a gun in answer to the beacon fire signal!—

"*Just in the nick of time!—Bradford!*" said Raymond, as he came crashing down through the ravine where Fedor Orlof's blood had stained the moss in the bygone years, as he sealed the title of the little Princess of Alaska to her disputed inheritance, *with his life!*—

"There's a crew *coming*, from the whaler!—The launch can head them off and *we can go* over the hill and *surround them now!*"—

Bradford had vainly endeavored to induce the now morose "French Pete" *to speak!*

"This fellow is *a devil!*" cried one of the sailors. "We had to carry him down through the ravine, and he moaned and covered his eyes with his hands. If you don't watch him, he will kill *some one else!*"

"How could have McMann so brutalized him as to arouse such *a strange ferocity?*" mused Paul. "He dragged him down, *like a famished tiger!* But he is price-

less here to me! The secret of the island is *safe* at last! How strange is Fate! How blind its decrees!"

Bradford watched the approaching launch, ignorant that Lefranc had been driven to a brain-sickening madness by recognizing the very glen where *Olga's lover fell*, in *years past* under his cowardly hand!——

The sudden apparition of McMann drove the desperate wretch, brutally maltreated on the lonely Farallones, to a madman's frenzy!

"I must keep him from running amok any longer! The Senator shall know of this at once! But here is the *safest place* to *keep him* well guarded."——

In an hour, the astonished whalers bore away their dead commander, for McMann had sailed as their Captain on *this* cruise! There was no suspicion lingering with them, for near the landing whence McMann had walked to his death, were several navigating instruments which the whaler had apparently landed *to adjust*, by the charts and well known headlands! The Revenue captain learned that their present destination was the Ochotsk Sea, and *then*, homeward!

"It will be months before they will reach San Francisco!—You need have *no* uneasiness about *this awkward incident!*" said the Revenue commander, as the party returned to the "Panther," leaving ten men to explore the island and clear it of any lurking wild beasts.

"I will run the steamer in a half mile closer, and land your whole material and outfit to-morrow.—Is this the *very* place you sought? There are nests of similar islands here."—

"It is the *one particular island* which I will make my *base* of operations!" said Bradford, thinking of the hidden golden proofs. The gold washer's pan remained in its concealment, for the future greatness of Paul Brad-

ford's fortunes now depended on no *smuggled letters* reaching San Francisco to bring a horde of hungry prospectors swarming north, before the Senator's land patents were *secured!* "I will trust Raymond *alone*, and not *even to him* will I tell the whole story of McMann and 'French Pete!'"—

By the next night, a substantial row of tents, with a rough board hut sheltering the stores, appeared on Douglas Island, and a draft of fifty men from the cutter heaved with a will at the piling up and carrying with tarpaulins of the ample stores for six months.

"French Pete" languished in a secure confinement on the "Panther!" By order of the captain, the surgeon gave him his especial attention.

"This man needs care and nourishment!—His whole system has received a severe shock from past privation and misery!—But I will attack his case vigorously. If I find him well enough in a week to leave him here, you can nurse him up by simply *good food, stimulants* and *kind treatment!* If you wish, I will take him down to the Marine Hospital, in San Francisco, Mr. Bradford."

"Will he *recover his mind*, Doctor?" asked Paul, carelessly knocking the ash from his cigar.

"Oh! certainly,—surely! With *ordinary care!*" the good surgeon said.

"Then, I will give him a good shelter up here, *with my party!*" remarked Paul. He thought, "He must *never* leave this island.—His memory of *past transactions here* might be dangerous! If he had any scheming friends and partners, they might be dangerous to us, *later!*—

Toiling unceasingly by day at the surveys,—and at night in the ship's cabin on his maps and field work, with fifty disciplined men to help in the field, Paul

Bradford completed his work of the first land location under his commission, *in a single week!*

A specialist who had been sent up by Herron, prepared the official maps and papers, in due form, aided by Bradford's clerk, who was an accomplished retainer of the Senator sent *secretly* from Washington.

"I suppose he is here to *spy* upon *me* in my unguarded moments!" bitterly thought Bradford, who knew too well that there is *not honor among thieves,—high or low!* He had *proved it*, to his cost, and had been often used as a mere cat's-paw!——

"But *this time*, I am a *made man!*" triumphantly reflected Paul, as he sealed the last document, an hour before the revenue steamer sailed.

The trusted clerk was to be bearer of the *vitally precious documents*, and the mystic telegraph could then flash the welcome news of the find, to the august Senator, within a week! Raymond, the only confidant of Bradford, had, *in secret*, explored all the gold-bearing resources of the high green island, now known by its chart name of Douglas Island.

"It is a *princely* treasure, Bradford!" said the veteran prospector. "The gullies and ravines are full of coarse grain gold washed down in hundreds of years *from the rotted quartz!* But the grand secret is that the whole island is only *one great knoll* of *low grade quartz gold-bearing rock!* There is no other such mine, *in the world*,—Bradford!" cried Raymond. "See *there!* A ship can lie alongside of the mine itself!—The ore can then be blasted off and fall into the mills! There is an enormous *water power* over there! The ores which would not pay even for hoisting *elsewhere* will be profitable *here!* There is no *timbering*,—no *drainage*,—no *pumping*! Nothing to do but to roll the ore into the stamp mills, and then

pound out the gold!—The whole island is a mass of even grade gold rock!"—

Raymond pointed in triumph to the sealed cans of "*specimens,*" each marked on a secret sketch, with the ravine or gully where it was found! "There is nothing in the world like this *wonderful island!* It is worth *a king's ransom!*"——

"And *you* shall not leave it alive, unless I have the Senator's telegram of the due legal *entry* of the locations I have mapped and made! When the United States government has sealed the patent, *then,* your life is safe,—but *not till then!* I *alone* must keep this golden secret!" so mused Bradford, his gray eyes aflame with a greenish light, as he listened to the expert miner's revelations.—

"This is the time-hoarded secret of the *Arctic Witch of Gold, under the Northern Lights!* It has been *suspected,* —*divined,* but *you and I* alone, have broken *the seal of ages!* I will tell you a strange story *after* the steamer sails!"

They stood alone on the point where Fedor Orlof had leaped ashore in the happiness of his glowing hopes! They had, at last, seen the "Reindeer," with its wild whalers fade from view, *far out to the west,* and when the "Panther's" crew, now slowly turning up the anchor, should guide the secret despatch boat southward, the golden island would be left in their sole keeping!——

"Don't get *lonely,* Bradford, "cried the hearty captain, "If your clerk gets to Washington and back! *on time,* with your 'fresh instructions,' in *five weeks* from to-day, you will see the old 'Panther's' nose stealing around that rocky headland! I think that you have everything snug here for a pleasant camp! When I bring up your

expected deputy, you and I will have a *royal cruise home*, by Sitka and the Archipelago!"——

"You may trust your poor Frenchman to behave himself now, Mr. Bradford," counselled the ship's surgeon, as he gave some simple directions to the man who eyed Lefranc's recovery with anxiety. "He seems to be *entirely right* in his mind now,—and really quite an *intelligent and decent* fellow! Some poor wretch whose life hopes were shattered by fate and has sought oblivion, safety, peace or restored fortunes far from his old haunts. —Believe me, he was *once* a gentleman! Try and win his confidence!—He is certainly a *curious* fellow!"——

"So he *is!*" answered Paul. "I *will* make a *study* of him,—*under the Senator's directions!*" he softly concluded.

Bravely flying the flag of the new rulers, the "Panther" sailed away, hard pushed, to bear the welcome tidings to the distant Midas of Washington, whose claws reached even to the Arctic.

In the five weeks of busy exploration and the thorough examination of every future resource, his heart beating high at the prospect of meeting his master, and of securing his interest in the spoil, Paul Bradford slept under the northern lights, with the conscious rectitude of a man who was serving both his *country* and *himself!* In long walks, even with the most wooing kindness, he had failed to fathom the secret of "French Pete's" *past history.* The waif had referred *but once* to any San Francisco friends, and never mentioned the subject of *gold* or *gold mining!*—Paul knew not that a frozen chill of fear now sealed Lefranc's lips,—who now realized at last that he had *twice stained his hands with blood* on the fatal Golden Island!——

"I am here, locked in their power! I must *dissemble!* And *once again*, I must escape!" Lefranc strained his

eyes seaward, but *he* failed to realize the possession of the mine's secrets at last by cool Bradford, and the wary Raymond!—

Leaping from the whaleboat lightly to the deck, when the "Panther's" gun called the islanders six weeks later to their oars, Paul darted into the commander's cabin. Even before he returned the bronzed sailor's greeting, he tore open an envelope in Herron's handwriting. It contained a yellow telegraph despatch which brought a storm of joy to Bradford's heart as he read the words:

"Patents signed and sealed.—Come down on steamer.—Leave Raymond.—You have done nobly.—Full detailed instructions."

"I have a mass of sealed letters for you, Mr. Bradford!" the captain cried. "Let us go down now to breakfast!" And while they made merry; in far off Dresden, the beautiful little Princess of Alaska knew not that *stranger hands* had grasped her undefended heritage,—the splendid prize for which *her lost father* had helplessly suffered,—and Fedor Orlof,—vainly *died!*

The "Panther" had swung for two days on the deep green gulf of the inlet before Paul Bradford had finished his final examination of the despatches and concerted all his measures for the winter now closing in on them! A liberal consignment of winter stores and mining supplies suitable for a busy season, with a stout yawl-rigged long boat were all landed, and *prospector Raymond* seemed perfectly content to spend the long dull winter on the Island! A companion selected by Herron had appeared in answer to the tidings of discovery sent jointly to San Francisco by Bradford and his doubtful lieutenant, Raymond.—The captain of the Revenue Cutter chafed to return, for the floating ice cakes already

hinted of huge fields to come, which might choke the only narrow inlet where the "Panther" could lay secure from the wild storms howling over the Behring, from the far Ochotsk!—Even the last adventurous whaler had flitted southward! Paul Bradford eyed with a quiet satisfaction the substantial cabins of the squad of twenty men, now thoroughly organized under Raymond and his mysterious associate!

"What shall I do *with this Frenchman,* Raymond!" demanded Paul, as he noted the keen interest with which Lefranc watched the "Panther's" preparations for a southward flight. "We must watch him! *He is dangerous!*"

The two chiefs sat together in the solid office hut of heavy logs. Packed with moss at the joints, and sheathed with planks it would defy even an Arctic winter.

"You are right! He has been caught slyly *prospecting* over the island! That fellow is *smarter* than I thought!" growled Raymond. "He has surely been up here *before!* I will not *lose him from sight,* when *you* sail! I will keep him busied *at my side!*"

"That's right," replied the exultant journalist who chafed to enjoy his sudden fortune! "Now, I have prepared some legal papers, which *I wish him to sign,* and the captain of the steamer will then certify to them! I wish to use his name in *a dummy title* to the mining claims, in case the land grant should finally fail! *You coax him to do this!*" Bradford handed over a set of papers prepared in due form.

"Oh! I can coax him, *to anything,* for a single bottle of whisky. *I hold the infallible cure!*" laughed Raymond. "But, *look here,* Bradford, you can tell the Senator that I'll guard this man, *with my life,* and *the*

mine too, but I want a decent slice when *the company is organized!* My story might be awkward! For *I* have been up here before!"—

"*You!*"—cried Paul.

"Yes! *The whole thing is an old scheme!* I went South to fight, at the outbreak of the war! I had lived on the Pacific coast for fifteen years. I came *back* with the commission of a *Lieutenant of Marines in the Confederate States Navy* in my pocket!"

"What did you then come up *here* for?" said the astonished Bradford.

"*I sneaked up here,* and joined Waddell on the C. S. N. cruiser 'Shenandoah' at the Seal Islands,—*the Pribiloffs!* That was my secret duty! To warn him of the *rendezvous* of the Yankee whaling fleet which he destroyed! Yes, sir, *I saw thirty-five whalers burned* in the Arctic long after *Lee* had surrendered! Ten were burned and sunk, in one group!—I helped to serve the *last guns fired under the Stars and Bars* on June 28, 1865!"

"You should have been *hung* for that pirate trick!" coldly remarked Paul.

"Yes; but *we do not all get our deserts in this sinful world!*" said Raymond drily.—"Why we even stopped the whaler 'Barracouta' only *two days out,* from San Francisco *in the middle of July!* The boys wanted to burn her also, but the Commander got the newspapers telling of the crash of the Confederacy from her, he lost his nerve, and *away* we coasted for Liverpool after artfully *disguising* our ship! When we hauled down the last rebel flag, to the 'Donegal' of Her Britannic Majesty's Navy at Liverpool, I was left there penniless! I had sneaked along the coast from Sitka in a little sealing schooner, on my way to the fur islands to join the daring '*Shenandoah!*' I had *money, rum* and *trading goods*

all furnished by *Southern sympathizers* at San Francisco! I learned, *then*, of the gold deposits here, and located it pretty nearly, for I gave the natives a grand 'pot latch!' "—

"But I was *a sworn rebel spy! Without me*, Waddell would *not have destroyed the Yankee fleet!* They would have been all scattered, and easily *taken the alarm!* I could not linger on my way!—I *dared not come back* till that *piracy* business was settled! Now, I want a recognition *here!* In five years from now, a three-hundred-stamp-mill will be pounding away here at this ten-dollar gold ore! It will not cost *two* dollars a ton to work it!—Now, I *know* 'old crafty'—your Senatorial friend,—and he and his money backers are quietly *stealing* this title! I want *some* of the paid up stock!—I can *afford to play fair!* The men I brought up here are all *old Confederate soldiers!* They will *stand by me!* And there are too many of us, *to assassinate!*—An official investigation would be ugly!—I know the wily Senator, *of old!* When Herron posted me, I left behind me, a *sealed letter* in San Francisco, to be opened *in case of my death!*—It would go at once *to the newspapers!*—You know what *they* can *do!*"—

"*Right well!*" answered Bradford, grimly. "Trust to me! I will make the secret company *do what is right!* Get this fellow's signature! *Hold on to him!*"——

"We are partners *now! You can bet on me!*" stoutly said Raymond. "But tell the Senator, Herron and Tomlinson to look out for some dangerous San Francisco backers of this *French fool!* That dead scoundrel McMann was *also up here*, for *no good!*—He had either bullied or juggled this secret from 'Frenchy!' I see the whole thing, *now!* He had intended to make this friendless man *show him* the mine, and had him kept covered up, *till he could get* a title! But you were here *first!* And

'Frenchy' got by accident, away! It is a *pretty good plan* that does not have a *break* somewhere! Watch!—*every one! everywhere!*—Even in long years from now you may have some trouble! But *we will hold her tight,—the gold island!* The only thing to fear is the awakening of our Uncle Sam to the fact that *your whole land survey* is a *swindle* to get the title to the mine—*our mine!*" grinned Raymond.

"*You are right!*" said Paul, in humble admiration. "I wonder that you *did not get hung* for that fighting and plundering, *after Lee's surrender!*"—

"We should have been *all hung as pirates!*" soberly said Raymond, "Yet the war ended *queerly,* after all! Lee surrendered on April 9th, 1865.—President Lincoln was murdered April 14th, and the Grand Review of the Armies was held on May 22nd and 23rd.—It is true that *Johnston* surrendered April 26th,—but Dick Taylor *did not* surrender his rebel armies till May 4th, and General E. Kirby Smith surrendered the last forces only on May 26th! This straggling wind-up saved *our* necks, for Mosby did not *surrender his wild riders* for *another month,* and their final pardon as outlaws helped *us!*"—

"While the North was already beating the sword into a plow-share, General Slaughter, on the old Palo Alto battle ground in Texas, fought *the last pitched battle of the war,* on May 13th, whipping Colonel Barrett and your blue coat Federals *soundly* at Palmetto Ranch! But you see, before you, *the man who helped fire the last guns* which thundered in war, *under the Stars and Bars!*"

"Two days after Lee rode, broken-hearted, through his crushed and captive legions, and the shot-riddled rebel battle-flags were handed over to the victorious Yankee hosts, I *sank the whalers* with Confederate shot and shell in the far icy waters of the silent Arctic! Never

forget, Bradford, on both *land and sea,* that we had *the last honors!* The Southern moccasin bit deep even in its dying agonies! And what *should have brought me to a halter,* has led *to my fortune!* This is a *conspicuous* reward of virtue!"—

The preachers might make a note here for judicious Sunday School use!—

"Now watch every avenue! *This is no world of fools?* —I'm mistaken if you don't yet have to fight this fellow McMann's backers! Of course, *the Russians* are out of the struggle *forever!*"

Paul Bradford's heart was at rest only when he looked back to see Douglas Island a mere green speck behind, wreathed in gray fog! As he stood watching the yeasty foam flying from the screw, churning away the green rollers, he marked the shore birds at last abandoning them! The "Panther" was heading straight for the Golden Gate! Even in his hour of supreme success Paul anxiously thought of the mine's future!

"A Senator's work *may be undone! Other* Senators may *volunteer to participate,* as Raymond has done! This would not bear public investigation! I certainly have 'French Pete's title in my pocket,' made legal! He had to yield to Raymond! It shall be *duly* recorded. But *who are the others?*"

Three weeks later, Bradford listened with pride to the great Senator's praise of his acumen. Around the secret council board, were the sharp-eyed Herron, smooth Eben Tomlinson and three other giant schemers of the money mart of the wild West!—Paul knew at last every detail of the private organization! Raymond's value was also appropriately recognized, for, *strange to say,* a confidential agent of *his,* appeared to claim a share of the memorandum stock of this great mine! It was regretfully parcelled out!—

"There are *wheels* within *wheels!*" mused Paul. "This fellow now turning up, acted on letters *smuggled down* on the 'Panther!' Who was it who spied on *me?* Who *helped* Raymond?"

And the journalist recognized in the ex-Confederate private even an *abler* mind, a *bolder* soul, than *his own!*"

"But *all was well,* at last, for the jackals clung together in a solid pack nibbling at this fat carcass,—*the Golden Island!* Bradford's share was *far more generous* than even *he* had dared to hope!

"We need *you,* Paul, to direct our '*literary bureau,*' and in *all* our general operations. We are going now to keep judiciously quiet and swing the *whole* resources of Alaska! Herron figures that we are invincible, *but,* my boy," said the careful statesman, "I am not so sure about *the loophole* in that cursed last *formal treaty* of March 3, 1870! It gives a color to any old Russo-American claims *prior* to October 18, 1867! Anything *later* than that is barred by *my* grants and patents and *our possession!* But *if* the greedy Russians should unearth *this secret,* some Muscovite adventurer might unload a wagonful of papers at the State Department, and make a great public clamor! We *could not stand it!*—You know, I have been *a little precipitate* in this title of ours!"

The smug publicist smiled!

"What would *you* do in *such a case?*"—cried Paul, his golden eagles seeming to spread their wings, *in sudden flight.*

"Oh! *Buy them in,* of course! There is enough up there for *us all!*—Compromise is *the only course* in all delicate affairs, from stealing a realm like Alaska, to meeting a pouting beauty's *sudden raids!* Our strong syndicate will be *self-sustaining, quiet* and *effective!* Soft and easy goes *far,* you know!—Raymond and his aid-de-

camp will be both *trusted* and *watched!*—So, we will probably now work the island as a *placer mine*, till we have skimmed off enough to put up a *huge stamp mill*, and that will take us several years, as we wish the title to run, before investing a cool *million dollars* in costly machinery! Keeping all these outsiders away, though, we can head off *any claimants!* If *I* am not in the Senate, 'the mantle of Elijah will descend upon Elisha!' Our syndicate is *political*, as well as *commercial!* We propose to perpetuate our secret rule in Alaska! Now, my dear boy, your *apparent* journalistic duties will give you an excuse for social leisure and relaxation.—You have well earned a well-deserved winter of enjoyment! Be prudent in showing, in your swelling state, your suddenly acquired fortunes! Remember the *wisdom* of the serpent! *Ah! a thought occurs to me!*" the Senator smiled softly, "you are *yet young—impressionable!*" His voice sank into a winning smoothness of personal reminiscence. "*Never trust a woman;* if you *do*, you will be *betrayed!* The experience of Samson, a mighty man of war, with the bright-eyed daughter of the Philistines has been *extended* and *varied* in many,—alas! *too many*—modern instances!"

Paul Bradford, wandering along and jingling the double eagles in his pockets, laughed heartily at the Solon who had evidently intertwined his *laurels* with the fragrant *myrtle!*

"A *great* statesman! A *giant* intellect! *A colossal fraud!*" mused Paul, waving his cigar, in parting salute, as his patron and partner vanished, in stately guise!

"And *that thing* is a Senator of the United States!" was the finale of Bradford's soliloquy, as he sought in the dim recesses of "Martin's," a very raffiné dinner, at which the *fair owner* of a pair of roguish, sparkling eyes

toasted her beloved *Paul* in drinking *to the cruise of the "Panther!"*——

The Senator's admonitions went the way of *all* advice! For Bradford *varied his abstinence* to please *his own Delilah*, and the Senatorial warning was entirely forgotten, *as he drank the Wine of Life*, with Love's sparkling bubbles breaking on the *glass of Time!* Bradford's *sad case* was another illustration of *well meant* counsel gone astray!——

It was two years after busy Raymond and his henchmen began to scoop up the scattered gold, drifted into the hollows of Douglas Island, when the long, looked-for day of Vera Orlof's "promotion" brought new life to the circle that vainly waited at Dresden for *even one word* from the mysterious prison place of Gregory Maxutoff!

Though loyal Dimitri Narychkine had exhausted *every* secret channel of information; though, at faithful Vera's bidding, he had used his gold, with lavish hand, it seemed impossible to pierce the veil of secrecy which still clung to Prince Gregory Maxutoff's *place of exile!*

"*Alas! Asia is a human hive, Vera!*" wrote the lover. "*We* have there *fifty* subordinate principalities, and a hundred *outpost camps.* A secret creeping onward of our merchant spies, our disguised officers and political agents always precedes the roving Cossacks who prick up sudden quarrels, thus fleshing their thirsty lance points!—After them there always travels *an organized* force, then fort and town finally fall into *our hands!* It is the great Propaganda of mighty Peter and the bold-eyed Catherine,—twin imperial aggressors!—I do know, however, that the Prince is *still alive!*—That he stoutly maintains his innocence, and, singularly enough, that *no* formal report with *proofs* has *ever* yet been filed with the

Department of Secret Justice, by Count Fersen, or that Tartar devil, Prince Serge Zubow! *Zubow has not been heard from for a year!* And Count Fersen holds the matter tied up in the Emperor's private cabinet! I *do not believe* that they dare face Maxutoff, if the matter can be rightly called up! But *when I come,* darling,—to claim *you* from the Empress, then, make it *your last boon* to beg the noble Czarina to *break the seals of silence,* — and to have Gregory Maxutoff *brought on to Petersburg* for trial!"——

It was on his homeward journey to receive the justly earned rank of Minister Resident, that, even in the bliss of his approaching wedding to the dainty girl who was now to make, *by her marriage,*—Stephan Orlof, the bright, brave lad, chief of his line, that Narychkine *tarried at Dresden!* With the aged Butzow, he sought now to still cheer up the pallid White Rose, and to promise *her husband's restoration* in due time!——

"You will find they *must* finally discharge him!" he said.

"I shall not *live* to see it, Dimitri," gently said the one to whom all hearts ministered. "I will meet him, only—beyond the grave!—*I feel it! I know it!*"——

There were tears in the pleading eyes of beautiful Countess Olga, who brought lovely Irma, now the light of the darkened home, to her mother's side.

"Ah! My child! *You* will see happier days,—there, by the Neva, under the *gracious Czarina's care!*" sighed Beatrice. "*You* go to the side of Russia's Empress! The years will be only an enchanted dream for you, in the bright laughing circle of the Catherine Institute! And, *darling one,—you* will have Stephan, for as cadet page of the Empress, you can always receive *him!* To *him,* the guarded doors are ever open! And you know,

my little princess of Alaska, *I* have promised to come, *after your first year*, to kiss the gentle Czarina's hand, and, *till then*, Countess Olga and myself, will only have the great artist's fame to live on here!—Arthur is our only mainstay now!"——

"My dear Princess, you must brush aside these dark forebodings! *He shall be saved!* Remember, *I* will have the Emperor's confidence!—*I* can aid you, when *I am Vera Orlof's husband*, when *I am a Russian Minister*"!—

In echo of this cheery voice, Arthur Randolph, his dark eyes fixed on the gentle girl at his side, joined the gallant and earnest Narychkine in the future promise of brighter days.——

"I know it! I feel it, that *we shall all meet again*,—in the happy hour when Prince Gregory *shall receive justice, pardon*, and regain *the Czar's favor!—As for Irma*, the very happiest day of my life, will be when she comes *to her own!* For, the moment when Prince Gregory is safe, I shall *secretly* return to Alaska!—Our Government *must*, duly recognize these grants and just claims,—but first, we are sworn to open *that prison door* which we can not now find!"

The years had brought to Arthur Randolph a just meed of fame, and in his *secret* heart, the artist whose name was rising, star-like, *to the zenith*, waited only for the hour of Irma's majority to speak words which would bring the rosy light of life's love-crimsoned blushes to the gentle maiden's cheek! The path which led *her* on to an Empress' side, to the bright scenes of her court service, showed him in his dreams, a fair young face, *waiting for him*, with *shining eyes of love!*

"*When* she has seen her *father freed*,—when she can *speak as a woman*, when the public recognition of the Empress has restored *her title and station, then*—"

In his roseate dreams, Arthur Randolph never thought of

the gulf *which might separate an Empress' favorite* from a *simple artist!* But his loyal heart told him in every throb of its many life tide that the unfolding flower, the sweet Princess of Alaska, *should* be *his alone!* In her cause, he would fight on to the bitter end! For, even in far off Dresden, the rumors of the treasure trove at Golden Island, reached Randolph, who had secretly watched the course of *the great syndicate!*

"Irma shall have her own,—but—nothing can be done *until her majority,—unless,* her injured father can face in victory! the secret cabal, who pulled him down, in his *hour of pride!*"

Partner of these secret plans, the fair Countess, whose world-famous picture was the star of the studio whereon Arthur, proud-hearted, followed the star of his rising fame, the grateful sister of the heart, Olga Orlof, cheered that hour when Irma and Stephan were both conducted to St. Petersburg by Dimitri Narychkine.——

It was in their quiet home seclusion, that the three friends marvelled over the stately festivities of the splendid nuptials which joined the great houses of *Narychkine* and *Orlof!* The Maid of Honor was a happy bride, the fairest of the fair! Vera Orlof was now hailed as the most fortunate of all the patrician Maids of Honor of the Empress! Two weeks after the wedding, which was graced by the august mistress whose merry favorite was now *a personage of state,* with a strange new light on her brow, Countess Olga flashed into Arthur's studio,—a vision of happy, glowing beauty!——

"*You have good news!*" cried Randolph, as he sprang up at the sight of the beautiful Countess!—

"I came to you, *at once,* Arthur! I dared not *breathe a word* to Beatrice, lest there may be another cross of Fate *in store! But listen!* !"

With her voice thrilling with eager happiness, Olga Orlof read the words of the spirited Vera :

"This first, *the very first letter*, since our return from Tsarskoe Zeloe,—is to tell you that Dimitri has been named *Minis ter to Greece* It will not be gazetted for some weeks, but the Czar received us most graciously, and I am the *very happiest woman* in Russia!—I went, at once, to see your Irma, who is already the favorite of the good Czarina! And to *you*, beloved Olga, I can say that little Stephan looks *every inch an Orlof*, in his dainty cadet uniform!—He bids to be as handsome as my Uncle Fedor!"

The filmy sheet trembled in Olga's hands. Arthur knew that her mind was far away where the husband of her heart was still sleeping in exile! In a broken voice she resumed:

"I am on the eve of a last masterstroke *in the matter of Prince Gregory*,—and Dimitri bids me to urge *you* to keep everything from Beatrice till we have gained *the final victory!* Life is a strange mystery! When I had joined the Empress *alone*, after *we* had both been presented to receive from the Imperial Consorts the news of Dimitri's appointment, I was made bold *by my great happiness!* I threw myself at the feet of the Empress, and begged her to remember the four years of darling Beatrice Maxutoff's *agony of suspense!* I was headlong and successful, in my pleading, for as we left the Czar, the master of ceremonies ushered in *Count Fersen*, still riding on the wave of his master's favor!"

"I spoke of that often-demanded report, which *never yet* has arrived,—of the delayed *trial*, which may be cut off at any time by poor Maxutoff's *death!* When I had finished, the Empress, in the boudoir, communed a half hour with the Czar, who then, recalled Count Fersen! This I learned from Milutin, who, as Captain of the Probajenskys, was Palace Guard Officer of the Day! My dear and honored guardian Empress returned, and startled me, when she said in a gentle voice: 'Vera! I hope you may *always* render us such loyal service! *It is monstrous!*

I learned from the truth, at last *forced* out of Count Fersen by the Emperor's direct question, that Prince Serge Zubow sailed for Khamschatka from Vladivostock, *last year*, and only the fragments of his wrecked vessel, dashed to pieces on Cape Lopatka, *have ever been found! He was drowned with all his crew!* No new commission has been appointed! But the Emperor has *now* ordered Fersen to submit a summary report, *with proofs*, to him *personally* within a month, and has ordered Prince Maxutoff *here* for trial! It will be a *secret* investigation!'———

"Fersen was *dismayed* at the Czar's positive orders, the Empress told me, and stammered: 'Sire! I know nothing, *in person*, of these alleged misdeeds,—for *I* was in St. Petersburg *when they occurred!*' The Czar was greatly incensed, and bluntly said: '*Then a grievous wrong has been done!* And I will have Gregory Maxutoff brought at once back here! If you can not *criminate him*, I will make a public *restitution*,—for there seems to be even *nothing to pardon!* Why was this man *Zubow's death* concealed from me?'"———

"So, dearest Olga, if this blessing of God comes to us *at last*, you may soon have *good news!* Dimitri will have two months to wait here and receive instructions! He will watch this favorable opening like a lynx!—And I only fear that the secret of Prince Maxutoff's *downfall* may have died, with this *wretch, Zubow!* Can it be that Count Fersen *fears* the Czar's anger, now? Ah! my God! What can replace the blasted years of poor Beatrice's sad life!—The innocent Prince, loaded with infamy, and bearing this injustice alone, lingers *far away*, in those burning Asian sands! How many aching hearts are thrilled, when the prisoner's pale lips murmur: '*If the Czar only knew!*' I wait with bated breath for any good news, and *you*, now hold Beatrice Maxutoff's very life *in your own dear hands!* She must *never* know until we can say to her: 'The long

night of sorrow is past! *Gregory is free! He is proved innocent!*'"———

And together, Arthur Randolph and the fair woman with the steadfast heart of grateful love, thanked God that there was a rift in the clouds, *at last!* Arthur Randolph gazed with moistened eyes at the sweet face of his secretly loved Irma Maxutoff!—His voice trembled as he fondly said: "May God's grace give back *her father* to our little Princess of Alaska!" "*Amen!*" fell from the lips of gentle Olga Orlof!———

CHAPTER XIII.

ZUBOW'S CRUISE IN THE KURILES!—LIGHT AT LAST!—"HASTEN WITH THE PARDON!"—A BELEAGURED CAMP—THE CZAR'S MESSENGER—LOVE'S CROWN OF SORROWS!—FAITHFUL TO THE LAST!—THE SEAL OF INNOCENCE—TOO LATE!

Two weeks after Vera Narychkine's exciting letter, the venerable Baron Butzow hobbled into the drawing-room where the Maxutoff family circle awaited the butler's summons to dinner.—There was that, in his face, which caused the watchful Countess Olga to signal Arthur Randolph to lead Princess Beatrice to the table.—Another eddy in life's strange current!——

"Only a moment! On *your private* business!" said the veteran diplomat. He was an adept at these short turns of life!—When they were alone the Baron offered a blue telegraph strip. "The train d'express passes at eleven o'clock. You have still time! *It is from Vera!* You must go!"

Olga Orlof gasped as she said: "To Petersburg?" and her eyes read the fateful message: "*Report filed.* Dimitri has made discoveries. *It must be met!* Come at once. *Bring Arthur!* Victory in sight!"——

The paper tape fell from her hands. "I *fear* this ordeal!" she shuddered.

"My dear child," gravely said Butzow, "with the Narychkine's influence and *this brute Zubow's lips* sealed in death, you can *boldly* face Count Fersen! He has *his own future* at stake now. You do not know Dimitri.—*He is very able.*—A very Greek in his adroitness! Now, is *your* time! While Vera is in her daily association with the Empress! You have a very natural excuse for your voy-

age, to visit *your son.*—It is for the sake of Beatrice! Make this *supreme effort! Think of the little Princess of Alaska!* Alone in the world! For her mother is, *even now,* but a graceful shade!"———

"Shall *I* make your travel arrangements? *Will* Arthur go on with you?" The old noble's eyes shone in entreaty.—

"I *will face* the past once more," Olga slowly said. "I *must* conquer the *pledged resolutions* of my bitter widowhood.—The days at Baranoff, when I was friendless and alone, must never be forgotten! And as *you say,* dear Baron, I must be a real mother to Irma *soon!*"

For the prophetic lights of another world shone out in Beatrice Maxutoff's brow. It was, day by day, more sadly plain to all, that the returning wave was *gentler,—fainter!* that the current of her being, broke softly *on the farther shore!*

"I will send Arthur at once to *you,—I* can explain to Beatrice that a formal legal conference is necessary for Stephan's rights and future before the Narychkines go to Athens. *Thus,* she can not be mentally disturbed until we have passed—'through night to light'—and I will come here with my Anna Ivanowna and guard this dear helpless *one* till you return," said the hearty Baron, now overjoyed.——

"Always the same *dear, loyal old kinsman!*" murmured Olga, with shining eyes, as she joined the now anxious Beatrice.

When, at their parting, the White Rose threw her arms around the beautiful, resolute Countess, her tremulous whisper told Olga that the gentle deceit *availed not* against the *second sight of sorrow!*—"Let me *know the whole truth* as *soon as you can,* dearest! All that I *may hope!* There is nothing left *to fear* now!"

Soft as the falling dews of night, that gentle voice of innocence touched Olga's very inmost heart. In silence

she drew the watcher to her throbbing bosom, and murmured: "Our only trust is in *the good Czarina!*"———

When Countess Olga Orlof swept at last across the threshold of the great granite family keep, *on the Nevsky*, her heart beat wildly with memories of the olden time. At her side, Arthur Randolph stood wondering at the luxuriance of Asiatic spoil which decked the mighty entrance hall.—With exquisite delicacy, Vera Narychkine's *instant welcome* gave the widowed Countess not a moment to cast a glance at the spot where on the huge tiger skins, Stephan, the old Boyar, had *gasped and died in the years long gone by.*——

There was a waiting circle at the princely table, of the bright-faced women Court comrades of the most charming ambassadress in the Czar's service.———

While Arthur Randolph, led by the courteous Dimitri, inspected later the treasures of the old feudal mansion, Olga felt herself, *for the first time*, an Orlof, in very truth. —There was a spirit of sisterhood in the graceful women who clustered round her, which breathed a welcome from loving hearts touched with her sad story.———

—In the grand hall of state, Vera Narychkine paused before a rich velvet curtain. There were eagerly exchanged glances, as drawing the cord, the hostess said with gentle pride to her guests: "*My Uncle Fedor!* The ideal guardsman!"

When through the mist of happy tears, Olga could turn her eyes from her own beloved Fedor's face, she sprang forward in delight, and turned to seek the artist Arthur.—But the *worker of the magic* had flown!—Beside the other, was an exquisite picture of the spirited little chief of the great clan, in his imperial page dress.—The secret of Randolph's exclusion of his beloved chatelaine for a month, from the studio, was now told in the laughing pictured face of the gallant boy!———

"*To-morrow* you will go to him! and to *our Irma!* But *to-night, you belong to me!*" As the brilliant circle left the grand hall, the strains of solemn music were heard. They seemed to hover near as if chanted by spirit voices in the air. "*Our private chapel!*" gently remarked Vera Narychkine, and her companion knew intuitively that the great library where the drama of Fedor's life reached its impressive tragedy, was hallowed in God's service by the *memory of the grand old Boyar who had so sadly died there!*—

The great Orlof house was all silent, when, in Vera's boudoir, the two men joined the anxious allies of distant Beatrice.—The servants had departed, and in a low voice, Dimitri Narychkine told the story of the present state of Maxutoff's case.

"My friends!" the young Minister began, "our action must be vigorous, immediate, and yet without a trace of resentment *against Count Fersen!* After the gracious Czarina has exerted her whole influence to right poor Gregory Maxutoff's wrongs,—the Czar *alone* can decide!—I have watched the Interior Department like a lynx since the order for the special report was given to Fersen! As it was marked for the Czar's personal attention *alone*, I learned that the report, handed in a week ago, had been stamped and sealed, for the Privy Council, duly receipted for and numbered, and it fell to my Cousin Boris, who is a Private Chamberlain and Extraordinary Counsellor of State to *open* it, *docket* it and *place* it in the Portfolio of the Emperor, reserved for his *personal use!*———

"Warned by me, Boris *memorized* it! For his life, he dared not copy a single word! Fersen now disclaims all knowledge of any personal corruption on Governor General Maxutoff's part. In fact, he frankly states that he had just *approved* the accounts of the Alaskan regime of the accused! He refers impartially to the *total loss* of the archives when the fur ships were wrecked, and then rests

his final charges on the *negligence* of Gregory Maxutoff, and his flat disobedience of orders in *not* sending an escorting frigate with the fur ships, duly placing naval officers, in charge of each, and a *guard* on board! This *positive* disobedience of orders, he alleges to have been the primal cause of their total *loss!* *One* cargo being wrecked on the Kuriles, then the *other* was made way with by irresponsible *citizens* on board! The death of Zubow, who would have been able to sustain the *other* charges is referred to, and also the unfortunate demise of the *Russian Consul* who forwarded the delayed secret instructions to Prince Maxutoff, by order of the Minister at Washington! This is all that we have *to meet*,—and the Czar may call it up on *any day* now!—It is a mercy of God that you, Countess Olga and Randolph, were both at Sitka, and that you can swear to the facts that the fur ships left *before* the war vessel 'Rurik' arrived, with the vital delayed instructions!"

"*Certainly!*" cried the pilgrims from Sitka. "Our returning steamer exchanged *signals* with the 'Rurik' leisurely moving north but only near San Francisco! The fleet had already *gone*, as Sitka Harbor was *overcrowded*, and the populace going home were anxious to be transferred to Russia! The fur ships really left, *at once*, on our departure! And it was Captain Linieff, of this delayed vessel, the 'Rurik,' who took Prince Maxutoff later over to *the mouth of the Amur!*"———

"We are then *saved!* Please God, Prince Gregory shall stand before the Czar yet, in honor!" Dimitri grasped Countess Olga's hands in joy, "*Listen!* I have been in telegraphic communication with the Secretary of Legation at Athens, and I look over all the despatches at the Foreign Office daily! Two days after Vera told me of the Czar's order, I noted the arrival of the 'Rurik,' under Captain Linieff, at *Athens*, bound for Sevastopol and the Crimea, to

refit it *there* after a long Arctic service! I *wrote* to Linieff, who is to come here at once for his presentation on his new rank of *Commodore*, and I gave him the *whole facts* of this mysterious trouble! *Gallant fellow!* He telegraphed back to me *at once!* 'I took the *orders up* long after the fleet and ships had sailed. Have a man on my ship now, who was *with Zubow* on the Kuriles! *Most important.* Am coming to the capital at once. Search despatch books. Foreign Office.' This closes our proof of Gregory's innocence.———

"Acting on this hint, I got an order to be allowed to look over *the Washington despatches*, and the returned San Francisco *Consulate* Records! There, *in due order*, I find that the Minister at Washington *positively* ordered the despatches to be sent to Maxutoff by *Captain Linieff.* He states that 'The 'Rurik' is the *swiftest* of the fleet!'—Now I have found an ordinary Consular despatch from San Francisco, to the Minister at Washington, saying: 'The *heavy supplies* for the Amur are *at last* on the 'Rurik.' *I have detained her* here, as she is the *last ship* of the year.'—This fixes the responsibility!"

"It is *clear* that, as the fleet sailed *five weeks before* the 'Rurik' left San Francisco, Prince Maxutoff *could not* have received these orders! The trouble seems to have been that after they were forwarded by Imperial despatch-bearer with the Legation bags to Washington, and endorsed '*per Rurik*,' they lay for weeks in the hands of the *Chancellor* of the Consulate at San Francisco. Linieff *alone* can say *who gave them* into his hands and *with what orders!* On *this*, the whole case will turn! He will be *here* at daybreak!"

"Prince Narychkine!" cried Randolph, a light breaking in on his brain, at last, "*Zubow* was at San Francisco, and later at Victoria, and came in at Sitka on the 'Nevsky' *before* the frigate 'Rurik.' I have heard the late Consul at San Francisco always spoken of as *an able and singularly hon-*

est man, personally! The bribing of the *Chancellor* to *delay* the stores, *hold* the despatches, and thus *enable* Zubow and Fersen to ruin Maxutoff was probably the *Tartar's work!* The Consul was *tricked*, the Czar *robbed*,—and our poor friend Gregory, utterly *ruined!*"

Olga, beautiful Olga, clasped Vera to her breast. The story of the past was bitterly sad!——

"And it was *for me*, for my *little Stephan*, that the Governor General *quarreled with that fiend Zubow!* And also to save your Uncle Fedor,—*my husband*, from the lash! Ah! Fatal happiness of that fleeting year! Is it *thus* a merciful God rewards the noble protector of the helpless?"

"*Wait*, Olga!" the flashing-eyed Vera cried, "*our Czar is just! He can pardon!* The Empress too will urge our suit! But how shall we *hasten* the pardon?"

"Go, darling, to the Palace *to-morrow*, with Olga and Arthur! *He* can wait in the great ante-chamber! I know that the Empress will send at once for our Sitka proofs! I will watch every moment of the Czar's morning, and *Boris* shall offer him the Fersen report, *with the remark* that Commodore Linieff (in waiting) begs an audience to say that he can prove the Governor's *innocence!—I* will bring Linieff up to the Winter Palace, and *not leave him* till the Empress has told the Czar all truth!"——

They parted in hopefulness to await the issue of the *day of days* for the lonely prisoner in the burning Asian deserts!——

Olga Orlof was as beautiful and stately as a marble queen when she entered with beating heart, when the day of trial wore on, the Winter Palace, led by Vera Narychkine, whose innate bravery was but *a trust in her gracious Empress!* The weird dreams of her *first night in the Orlof mansion* left Countess Olga as pale and worn as a watcher at the tomb! In her glorious sapphire eyes trembled the reflection of tears, shed in bit-

ter sorrow, for the *living* who bore the burden of ignominy for her sake, and for the *dead* who lost his life for the fleeting joys of her heart love! And yet, *sad as the past was*, shadowed with sorrows, before her rose the rosy face of the robust little heir of the Orlofs, and the virginal sweetness of the gentle Princess of Alaska, whose sorrows were swept away in the lovely circle of the patrician maids of the Catherine Institute! "Life offers to them *now* its crown of roses and thorns!—Its cup of gall and honey!" It was with a prayer for these bright young loved ones, in all the splendid promise of their youth, that the dethroned singer, the convict's widow, *a Countess, by the waywardness of Fate*, passed into the Imperial presence!

Vera whispered: "*Be brave now!*—for Linieff and Dimitri are already *in audience!*"——

When an hour later the re-united friends sought the shelter of their stately home, bronzed and joyous, with a ring of triumph in his voice, Commodore Linieff pointed to the cross the Emperor had taken from *his own* breast!——

"For loyalty to the truth! *For gallant service!* For unearthing the *villainy* of this dead fellow *Zubow!* He seems to have *imposed* on my delegate Count Fersen, Commodore, as well as upon *myself!*"——

The telegraph was already invoked to speed along from Astrakhan the full pardon of the Emperor!

"I shall send an Imperial Courier to Madame Maxutoff, at Dresden, to receive such letters and greetings as she may wish to send to her injured husband! He is at the Headquarters of the Expeditionary Force at Khokan! I shall receive Prince Gregory Maxutoff *n a special audience* upon his arrival, and I will try to repair the past! He shall serve me long in honor, *in happier days!* To *you*, Narychkine, I speak with pride as the son of one of my brother officers in the Guards! Your gallant father drew his sword with me for Russia, in the Caucasus!"——

With these ringing words, the autocrat of all the Russias dismissed the supplicants.

"I shall have the crews of the two vessels searched out, and all returned to Sevastopol! There, I shall order an official inquest to search out every corner of this great villainy! The Minister of the Interior and of Foreign Affairs shall make a *special report,* for it seems that Count Fersen has been *systematically* hoodwinked!"

The Czar's face was very stern as he directed his secretary to summon Count Fersen for *personal* explanations.—

Around the table in the grand banqueting hall of the Orlof's, the circle of the evening was the happiest on the Neva.—For Arthur Randolph, it was the gateway of a lover's heaven! The sturdy little chief of the Orlofs sat in state between the dainty Ambassadress and Countess Olga! The personal command of the Czarina to Madame Maxutoff to rejoin her husband on his arrival would break up the dream which made Randolph oblivious to even the *hard-won pardon.*—For, in the delicate, dreamy eyes of the little Princess of Alaska, there was a light new to the artist, who had seen the flower of her being slowly unfold, *at his side.* Frankly cordial, her heart thrilled with the happiness of her noble father's regained freedom, her eyes dropped shyly, and the blushes of her cheek betrayed the sweet consciousness of the awakening of life's spring! The lonely girl drinking in the artistic spirit of her companion of years, had learned, *with a sudden start of self-consciousness,* that an invisible Ariel with magic wand had kept them long *tenderly apart!* Dimitri Narychkine was diligently unravelling the meshes of the intrigues of the past with Commodore Linieff, while Olga and Vera planned for the future reception of Beatrice Maxutoff.

"I dare not be absent *longer* from her, lest the flood of this sudden good fortune overwhelms her. We will go back to Dresden *to-morrow,* Arthur," said the Countess.

"*So soon?*" cried Irma, with one glance at Arthur which revealed the loving heart beating fondly behind the bosom's jealous concealment.

"Only to quickly *return*, my Princess!" gaily answered Arthur, "for we will *all* be here at the *home-coming* of your father! I must understand *fully* the secret of the missing fur cargoes, for even Beatrice will be eager to know of the methods of this villiainy."

"It is simple enough!" answered the Commodore. "Zubow had creatures *of his own* on *each* vessel.—Under pretense of repairs, the *first* vessel put in at the lonely Kurile Island, where the 'Nevsky' lay in waiting.—The first cargo was secretly *discharged* and, in junks, taken to Japan, whence it safely reached Europe later in the thieves' hands. Sailing in company, *apparently for Nagasaki*, the first vessel was run ashore designedly, and Zubow *took off* the crew! The merchant officers received *their share* of the spoil, *in kind*,—the men were simply *drafted* into Zubow's service, and he took good care to leave them *later* in Khamschatka whence they could not depart without a home passport which he denied on *varied* pretexts!——

"Standing boldly *down* the Pacific, the *other* vessel, moored in Esquimalt Harbor, was unloaded, and the *richest cargo* ever sent to Europe was trans-shipped through America! It was a *propitious* time, for the Russian squadron *never* entered an English port, and there was *no Muscovite official* left in Alaska after the Governor's departure! The only war vessel left in the North Pacific, the 'Rurik,' was *on its way* to the Amur, and the Russian Asiatic squadron had wintered in *South Japan*. It is clear that *fear alone* kept the officers and men who finally traced out Prince Zubow's villainy, *silent*, for he enjoyed the *dignity* of Governor of Khamschatka, and none of these awkward witnesses *could leave* the peninsula to which he had sailed with his own, and the stolen vessel.—Not a soul on the Pacific ever

dreamed of Prince Maxutoff's dangerous position, of the secret *accusations* of Fersen and Zubow, and of the Governor General's *final ruin!* The ignorant sailors never questioned the Prince's proceedings,—the officers were well bribed *to hold their tongues,* and *none of them, even,* could *return* to European Russia, or *leave* the land of icy volcanoes, Khamschatka, without Zubow's own passports!——

"But when his ship the 'Nevsky' *was missing*—with him and his whole staff *on board,* when the fleet despatch corvettes returned for the season, having seen the 'Nevsky' in the stormy Ochotsk, and the last boat reporting the Governor as '*missing,*'—General Dachkof ordered me to skirt the coast at once with my powerful steamer and ascertain the fate of the 'Nevsky'.——

"The few survivors who struggled through the wild breakers on the awful night when Prince Zubow perished miserably, were living on lichens and fish, with the squalid natives of gloomy Cape Lopatka! The death of fierce Zubow loosened the tongues of the men who were his bondslaves *no longer!* I brought them all down to Nikolaevsk, and General Dachkof's sagacity *soon* penetrated the mystery of Maxutoff's disgrace! Loving Gregory and fearing the smothering of the truth by the all-powerful syndicate of Zubow's friends, he sent the most intelligent men quietly *home with me,* and has since reduced the testimony of the others to writing.—*Your* letters at Sevastopol, and your warning telegram prevented *me,* perhaps, divulging this to those who might have warned Count *Fersen* and *Phillippi!* —The villainy of these two cormorants of the Arctic, is a disgrace to the Czar's government!—The shore natives of Siberia are continually kept *in terror* and brutalized by these bold *fur pirates.*——

"There are many *other* crimes which stain the *memory* of the man whose requiem is howled by the wild winds of the Ochotsk. His own body was never found. It was ground

in the fangs of the cruel rocks of the terrible coast! But what awful secrets *died with him!* This man tells me that Zubow and a *refugee named Lefranc* dogged and spied upon Prince Maxutoff's expedition searching for gold! They landed on the island which *he* had selected and secretly *watched his parties for days!*"——

The Commodore abruptly ceased, for Countess Olga's fair head fell on her bosom in a sudden swoon of fright! She knew *at last*, the brutal revenge of Zubow! And of the *coward hands* that wrought Fedor Orlof's death! The sad story of the past was unravelled before the loving woman sobbed herself to sleep!

As Countess Olga passed out the next day from under the great granite arch of the Orlof mansion, her homeward voyage was blessed with beautiful Vera's last whispers:

"The sorrows of the past have now all *faded away* Dear one, *you* have broken the spell! *You* have brought back happiness to our Beatrice! Look at your own *Stephan!* The Empress has already asked for him at the *Corps des Pages!* Around our darling Irma,—the Czarina's love will cling as a mantle, and she has Dimitri, you and me, as well as—*Arthur!*"

The beaming bride finished with a mocking smile, for the artist seemed to have left his heart behind, when the great doors of the Catherine Institute swallowed up the reluctant little Princess of Alaska.——

"I suppose we will *all* come back, when Prince Gregory *arrives!*" reflectively said Randolph, as he bade adieu to the provoking young ambassadress. His mind was already fixed on a certain hoped-for future meeting with Irma!—

"Naturally, *the Maxutoffs* must be presented *together* to the sovereigns who have vowed to repair the years sacrificed to Zubow's dark crimes!"

But the teasing patrician Vera said gravely:

"An *artist* whose name is already known from Washing-

ton to the salons of Paris, Berlin, Munich and Dresden, a man whom *even the Italians* can say is not a slave to German art, a man worthy of the best French modern schools' laurels, will be kept *very busy* in his studio!"

"I *might* come if *you* asked me!" said the artist doubtfully!"

All lovers are blind in their pre-occupation!

"Oh, by all means then, *you must come! Dimitri*, you know, will be *so glad* to see you! He has taken a great fancy to his '*American brother!*"

The two ladies exchanged very meaning glances, as Arthur Randolph departed without leaving any *further greeting* for that glowing young beauty,—the Princess of Alaska! *A singular omission!*—

Countess Olga Orlof wondered at the strange calmness of Princess Beatrice Maxutoff herself under the joyous news of her husband's pardon! The flame of life flickered but feebly within her worn frame! Baron Butzow ominously *shook his head!*—

"Olga, I can *not* understand Beatrice! She seems as if only *dazed* by the good news! I do not think that she will ever *realize his liberation* until she *meets* him! And then I almost *fear* for the result! This crowning mercy is of the kind that either *kills* or *cures! Which* will it be? Ah! Russia! *Russia!* I can see *now* that had any cool, honest man,—*not allied* to the great Siberian schemers,—gone out to the North Pacific, the innocence of Prince Gregory would have been at once *manifest!* Even *brave old Dachkof* would have ferreted it out,—but he was *powerless* in Khamschatka,—and the *treachery* at San Francisco, with Zubow's holding back all his poor underlings in *his own* jurisdiction made it *impossible* to reach the truth!"——

"Only the *unexpected death* of the Tartar Prince could loosen the tongues of the servile agents used in that stupendous villainy!—I can see that every movement was

planned to forestall the Czar's kindness to Maxutoff! The fatal mistake was not to have ordered *two* frigates to have convoyed the Governor General, his suite, the fur ships and the property home! Then, in the honorable hands of navy officers, the *whole* would have been safe! It is but one more proof of the *utter* failure of Russia's bureau system!—It will all be different when the telegraph and rail reach the Pacific at Vladivostock! The Ariel and Puck of modern civilization will then be *twin defenders* of the Czar's interests! Alas! Beatrice! *Sweet White Rose of Sitka!* Your sorrows, your appealing, accusing eyes will *soon* be to friend and foe but a *graceful memory!* For, not even haughty Peter's heir can give back these wasted years of undeserved sorrow,—*of unmerited shame!* Not even the Czarina's necklace of half a million in matchless pearls can outweigh these years of Life and Love lost forever!"—

"Better had Gregory and Beatrice lingered together, under the northern lights, reaping only the *fancied harvest* of Hope!—Sweet Irma! Unhappy Princess of Alaska! Your sovereigns should hold you now tenderly at heart, as *the ward of sorrow*, a dainty child born to *April's smiles and tears!*"——

And Olga and Arthur lovingly waited, silently eyeing each other, for weary weeks to hear the summons to the home-coming in honor of poor Gregory Maxutoff!——

While doubts and fears reigned *alternately* with cheering hope, over the expectant circle at Dresden,—and even Princess Maxutoff's gentle eyes bore an *unvarying question* in their sad gleams, far away, a thousand leagues away, a brave Russian general held with desperate valor the rude earthworks around the bazars of Khokan, against a mad struggle of the Turcomans to drive the white-capped Russ into the Jaxartes! The wild chiefs of Turkestan had met secretly in the far slopes of the Thian Shan, and led by the

Khan of Khokan, waited till the absence of heavy detachments had weakened the cavalry brigade holding the very outposts of Russia's Asian frontier line! And then, the mad children of the desert swooped down, with fire and flame, on the divided invaders! Over the arid, burning, salt-crested plains, out of the alkaline bitter well pits, from behind deserted mud-walled villages, and dashing forth from scattered oases, the wild riders triumphantly yelled, in a fierce joy, as they smote the enfeebled Muscovites with their heavy curved sabres! Assaulted at different points, the Czar's foot soldiers dug breastworks, and, from their shelter, with their heavy rifles, decimated the ferocious brigands! —The hardy Cossacks plied lance and revolver, and only died, when hacked off their horses, like tigers, fighting to the last, *for the Czar!*

But, starvation, thirst, and the failure of ammunition finally crippled the Russian generals!—The valleys of the Oxus and Jaxartes swarmed with the manstealers in a great national revolt.—The great hollow plain of the Caspian and Ural seemed *lost to the Czar*, and in this desert land, *sweltering* in tropic summer, *Arctic* in the fierce winters, the bare open plains gave no shelter to the organized European troops! The river meadows, the lean pastures, the scanty oases, were held by the Rebel Mohammedans, and all *the western avenues to help* and reinforcements were at last *closed!* Piles of the heads of the gallant Russian soldiers were ghastly signals of "*No Thoroughfare!*"——

When, after the repeated failure of couriers to reach the outer columns, the Russian General shut himself up in Khokan,—he realized that his two expeditionary commanders had been *driven to bay* like himself!—With a strong hand, he seized the supplies of Khokan, expelled the rabble, and massing his mountain artillery for defense, placed the herds and animals under strong guards!

"It is *now a siege* to *the bitter death!*" cried the gallant General, as he rode back from a charge, his sword *red with blood*, to his headquarters in the principal mosque!

For he had loopholed the buildings,—made convenient magazines of the rich mosques,—and, *at the sword's point*, forced the treacherous Khokanese to barricade the streets and put the garden walls and cemeteries in a military fitness for defense!

"Water, a month's food, with the animals, we have! Powder, lead and our good swords!"

He drove out the useless rebel population *to live on his enemies*, and then, issued the last decree of war,—the dread order for "*No Quarter!*"——

While the Czar's flag flew proudly, in derision of the circling hosts who charged the lines *daily*, General Apraxin from the tallest minaret, where the Romanoff's ensign still wooed the breeze, gloomily watched at night the camp fires of the *vast hosts gathered around* him!—It was *late* in the season! The harvests were all carried off or secreted, and with spear and knife, the maddened mob, expelled by his stern orders, aided in the now *frantic daily rush* on the works where the Russians grimly killed their foes *in silence!* They forgot at last to cheer in victory for *hope had fled!*—Still they swore to die *'for the Czar!'*——

On the *south*, from the hostile *Afghans*, and the *English*; —on the *east*, from the Chinese,—*no assistance could be hoped!*—They were secret foes exultant at this serious check to the *Czar's flag!* To the *west*, the valley of the Oxus was now firmly closed by the wild hordes of the Emir of Bokhara and the Khan of Khiva! A wild desire to sweep the Russian invaders into the Sir-Daria maddened the swarming fanatic horsemen of the plains!

The conflict ceased not *with day*, when the Russian rifles held the fierce riders at distance! In the *starlit nights*, in the *blackness of midnight*, the fierce Mongol Turks charged

in a terrible fury up *to the very works!* It was then, that the *General* and *private* fought, side by side, to repel these matchless riders of Turkestan! The children of the world's bravest fighters were drinking deeply of Russian blood! The peerless Genghis Khan, a world's hero, and his later kinsman, resistless Tamerlane, whose pyramid of skulls attested the swordsman's awful rule, had transmitted to these dauntless rebels the bravery which is the type of the Mongolidæ!

These hardy Turanians fought their Slavic foes with the ferocious courage common to the Uigours, as well as the Seljuk and Osmanli Turks. For the Turkish Mongol, brave to a point of madness, has a common tongue and warlike nature from the Yakuts of the icy sea to the *'unspeakable'* Osmanli of Plevna!

General Apraxin's brow was dark, as he gazed out on the thirsty plains where fiery Persian Iranian once met the undefeated Turanian, where Macedonian, Arab, Mongol, Russian, Chinese, Afghan and even the red-coated English, have battled since Christ's coming to hold the roof of the world,the blue-peaked Altai mountains: the key of Central Asia!——

"I shall lose the Czar *this army!* I shall relax for Russia the hard won dominion of Turan!" groaned Apraxin, as he swept with his glass the lonely valley of the Jaxartes! For from the *north* he watched daily *in vain* for the gleam of Russian bayonets!—He waited hopelessly for the rescuing columns from Tashkend!

Day by day, the General lost the last vestige of hope! From his slender minaret he swept the eastern sandy battle plains! No sound of heavy guns boomed out to indicate the return of his two detached columns!

"*Even with them,* I could *only* fight *my way out!—To give up Khokan* is to *betray* the Czar!"

Realizing that his knots of couriers, sent ten days before

to Tashkend had all been cut off and murdered, he closed his glass, after an hour's bitter mental struggle!

"*I must call a council to-night!* Either I must renew my past attempts to gain help at once from Tashkend, or blow up the magazines and retire *down the Jaxartes*, with these yelling hordes charging my rear guard *fifty times* a day! They will swarm on my flanks, despite the advance, and wear away my brave fighting men in the snapping, crackling zone of ever-living fire, which will hover moving *around us!* Could I hope to make the march of ninety-two miles to Tashkend, fighting my way, with my sick and wounded?"

He dropped his head on his war-worn breast in despair!—Surrender meant death to all!——

His soldierly spirit rose, as reaching his disheartened staff, he sprang on his horse and headed a needed *counter charge!* The clouds of dust, whence red lambent flame darted out, the wild melee, with its screams of pain and yells of triumph, told that the lean brown devils were hurled on the lines again in their splendid recklessness of death! For it was a "holy war," and the white-veiled Dervishes rode to their death, knife in hand, struggling like jungle leopards in the toils!

Behind a hard-held redoubt, before which lay mounds of the dead shaven Turcomans, in the gloomy silence of the night, where the only living thing heard was a stray charger who neighed over his dead master, Apraxin and his officers, in whispers, counseled as to the *last resort!* At any moment, a mad rush of the foe might break off the conference! With ominous faces, the superiors listened to their stubborn General!

"*Any further suggestions!*" the anxious chief paused, when they had *all* spoken. "It is *one* of two things, either, *defense here to the last*, or the *continuous battle* of

a moving column!—If the division at Tashkend would make a forward movement so as to meet us *half way*, these circling hosts would soon vanish!—We could *pass on* to recruit at Tashkend, and a strong fresh column *push on here* and *hold this strong position!* From Khojend, flying columns could chase off the surprised rebels!—But, nothing less *than a full regiment* could fight its way through, and bring us help!" There was a pause. "Shall we *vote*, gentlemen?" Apraxin's breast was moved by an awful struggle. He had never *abandoned a post* in his thirty years of war!

"Excellency, *I have a soldier in my body guard* who has once been *a man of rank!*" a gray-bearded Colonel said: "He has been now *four years* in the Aral valley and knows all the local dialects! He thinks that a few brave *chosen men*, dressed as camel drivers or buffalo herders, might descend the Jaxartes, drifting along at night on a raft, and lying in hiding by day, and well disguised so as to deceive any wandering swordsmen! He has offered to *try and run the lines alone*, but I would *not* consent! He is a very native in his appearance now! I have questioned him and he thinks the effort to push out *small parties* of *military messengers* on to Tashkend, was simply *fatal to success!* Now, if a half dozen of these disguised men were *to try! He* says *he* could get down to Tashkend alone in *three days!* If he *should* live to meet the Russian outposts, help could be here *in a week!*—We could hold out till then!"—

"*Good!*" cried a dozen voices. "Let us *make the attempt!* Let us hold our lines firmly a week longer *on the defensive*, prepare our wounded, make ready, and if *nothing is heard in ten days*, then march out *after destroying the defenses!*"

"Bring the man here!" the General ordered. "We will, at least, listen to him!"—

And ten minutes later, in a simple soldier's ragged uniform, Gregory Maxutoff, *once the Czar's proud Viceroy of Alaska,*—stood before the anxious circle! His stern eloquence had aroused the Colonel's faith! Now, lean and tigerlike, he thrilled the desperate officers, with the quiet decision of his plans!

"I can select *two or three comrades* who have the same knowledge *as I have!* The men who have ridden the *courier express* for four years! I will stake *my own life* on the plan!"

"You can *do no more,—even, for the Czar!*" answered Apraxin. "Go! Get your men together, but only as *volunteers!* Return at once! Adjutant! You will see that *this man* has everything that can be done! Return here for your *last orders!* What is your final plan?"

"To dress *myself as a Dervish*, and *underneath*, wear the guise of a herdsman, taking with me a couple of skin air-bags, and then finding a log of driftwood, I can drift five miles an hour, hiding in the river's rushes by day! I will explain, *if captured*, that I *fled* from a knot of Russian wandering fugitives!"

His simple earnestness impressed General Apraxin.

"What is *your name*, my man? Your despatches will be all ready *in an hour!*"

"I should start *at once!* I can get down to the river safely before midnight! They are quiet now! I wish to pass Khojend *at night!* Then, I can hide in the ravines of the Soralka and Djirhik, and reach the gardens of Tashkend *safely!* My companions will each follow on two hours later, taking *opposite* sides of the river!" The worn and wasted soldier waited the signal for action!

"Stay! *What is your name?*" the General asked.

"*Gregory Maxutoff,*" replied the private.

Apraxin sprang to the side of the forlorn-hope volun-

teer.—"*Not the man who was once a Governor?*" he hoarsely whispered.—

"*Yes,* your Excellency! *A convict* now, reduced to the ranks!"

"*Go! In God's name!* If *you reach Tashkend,* the Czar *himself* will reward you! You will *save a Russian army!*"

"*I will try to do my duty!*" simply answered the volunteer, and, in the darkness, their hands met! They were both soldiers under fire!—

Two hours later, over the battlefield in its clinging shades of night, where skulker and jackal vied in prowling for prey or plunder, *moving along on his hands and knees,* the aristocratic Maxutoff,—*once a Czar's Viceroy,* crawled through the nullahs, choked with the bodies of men and horses!—A heavy native knife attached to his waist by a thong, a staff, a gourd for water, and the despatches concealed in his sandals' soles, were the wanderer's slender outfit for the desperate quest!—The wallet of biscuit was his simple store of food for the long journey.—It was three o'clock, when, inflating the two skin bags he lightly carried, and clinging to a light palm trunk left stranded on a sandbar, the messenger of the Czar floated down in the current of the Sir-Daria, silently past the huddled outposts of the rebels!—As he left the shore, he heard behind him only the scattering shots of night prowlers, and the howls of the jackals fighting over the grisly feast!—

For four long days, the roar of battle still raged around the walls and ledges of Khokan! The stubborn Russians, husbanding their *own* ammunition, only repelled positive assault and sallying out then, stripped the slain, and kept the rebels at bay during the day with their captured weapons and ammunition.—A few well-

directed shots from the mountain rifled pieces broke up their charging columns of Turcomans!

"The infidel dogs are surely waiting *for help!*" growled Abu-beg, the rebel chief, as he reined up his white Arabian to scan the daily strengthened lines of the defenders! "But the *dogs of the desert* have fattened on their dead messengers!" and he waved his fierce legions on again, in the name of Allah, to a glorious death!—

Through the streets of beautiful Tashkend, lying on the rich plain of the Iaralka, a mule-litter bore, *that very day*, a wounded, gasping fugitive, who, roughly bandaged, could only gasp, as his groans interrupted him. "*To the General! For Life and Death!* The garrison of Khokan is beleagured! *Despatches!*"—

Before the sun was down, the great city in its ten miles of length and five of breadth, was alive with the mustering squadrons. The hardy Russians sprang to their arms and sallied forth from the gardens and vineyards to the rescue of 'fighting Apraxin!' Couriers at wildest speed had swept out already to consolidate the outposts, and push along a strong column to hold Khojend, until the long camel trains and mounted batteries could by morning—be on the main road, backed up by the swinging masses of the bearded infantry soldiery!—Strong guards controlled the excited bazars, and every hour the singing bugles told of the stern warriors' departure for those fields where the sword of Peter would drink in revenge, the blood of the flower of the Asian chivalry? The brave General-in-Chief, before he rode out, leaving a grizzly lieutenant to hold the turbulent mob in an iron grasp, stood by the bedside of the wounded hero courier!—

"Your Excellency! He must *not* be disturbed! All depends, *on quiet, now!* He has a very deep lance

wound in his side, and is exhausted by fatigue and the great loss of blood."-

"Does *any one* know him? He is *a gallant fellow!*" The Chief gazed around at his silent staff. "Attend him, *as if he were* the Czarevitch," he cried.

"This man has saved the *honor* of the Russian army,—if the column reaches Khokan, *in time!*"

The Commanding General turned away, with a heavy sigh.

"*If he lives,* he shall have the *Grand Cross of St. Vladimir* for this! Find out his past history! *The Czar shall reward him!*"——And the old soldier swept out to the field to smite and spare not!—

"He will never need *earthly* laurels, I fear!" said the kindly old Chief-Surgeon as the chief vanished. At the *first outpost,* the Governor-General found the only *other* survivor of the *five* volunteers!—Three had been either captured or driven to the companionship of the desert beasts!

"*Who* was your leader?" demanded the eager Commander.—

With pride, the rescued soldier said: "The man who *has given up his life* to *save* your army over there, was *once, Prince Gregory Maxutoff, the Governor-General of Alaska!*"

"If he lives, the Czar *shall pardon him!*" solemnly said the startled Chief, "I swear it!—I heard *that old story* years ago! See that a special despatch be sent to Orenburg *at once,* to be telegraphed forthwith to the *War Department* on this subject."—The Chief of Staff bowed, and calling an orderly officer wrote his instructions.

"*Forward!*" ordered the Chief. "We *must* press *on after the Cossacks!* If *they* are thirty miles away *now,*

by daybreak of the day after to-morrow, they will charge *through that rabble!* If our *main body* is half way over the desert, then the rebels' doom will be quickly *settled!*—

The ravens had fattened on the bodies of thousands of the mad Turcomans before General Apraxin, after his relief, gazed once more in the face of the Czar's heroic messenger, lying wounded at Tashkend!—

The two united outlying columns had been finally relieved and united, and, far and near, with wild 'hourras', the Don Cossacks sabred the exhausted plainsmen, whose steeds were now worn out, and who were driven out to perish in the burning desert!——

In a great chamber of the depot hospital, a white-faced man, now fever-worn to a skeleton, lay scarcely pressing the hospital bed with his wasted frame!

Gregory Maxutoff was *slowly dying*!—The afternoon sun streamed in through the rustling foliage of the rose-fragrant garden, an old harem of the conquered Khan! There was no sound in the bare room save the whisper of a circle of grave Generals, glittering in all the marks of the Czar's favor!

"It is for *you*, General Apraxin!" said the Commander-in-Chief, "to tell him now of the *Czar's pardon!* Of *his restored rank!* You can tell him that *his name will live in Russia* as the man who saved a beleagured stronghold,—and an exhausted veteran army! The letter,—the last message of *his wife!* *He* can *not read it!* Can *we* read it to him?"

The Chief-Surgeon led the Commander aside to an ante-room.

"He has only a half hour—or an hour, *at the most!*"—

The General's voice was broken as he said softly: "*Then*, Apraxin must tell him *all!* He shall know of his *pardon!* Of his wife's *undying love!*"

"It is well!" the old Surgeon replied and bowed his gray head. "Hasten! for the sands of his last hour are running away!"

The two victorious Generals and the Surgeon alone, bent over the pale sufferer, whose heaving breast now scarcely moved the light counterpane with his light breathing! At hand with restoratives, the eager physician waited with his faithful aids.

"Do you *know me,* Prince Maxutoff!" gravely said Apraxin, as he held up in his hand the pictures of Maxutoff's wife and child,—*the Princess of Alaska,* whom another hour would make *fatherless!*

The dying man fixed his lustrous eyes in eager mental attention upon the General who had called him "*Prince*" for the *first* time!

"The *Czar* has *pardoned* you! All is known at last! *Your innocence is adjudged!*"

A gleam of light shone in the glazing eyes of the sufferer.

"He sends you *this!*" And the brave old soldier laid his *own* grand cross, in Maxutoff's wasted hand!—

The thin fingers *did not close upon it,* but feebly plucked at the muslin coverlet! Maxutoff tried vainly *to speak!* The Surgeon sprang forward and moistened his pale lips. His glazing eyes told the story! It was 'Too late!'

"*Hasten!*" whispered the surgeon!

In a tender voice Apraxin read the few burning lines of love traced by the hand of fond Beatrice Maxutoff, waiting lonely far away on the peaceful banks of the Elbe! The glad light in the sufferer's eyes told that Love's *Crown of Sorrows, the last greeting of his beloved,* was silently accepted,—that his heart thrilled still with her gracious memory!

"Your *spotless name*, your heroic *gallantry*, will be the proud *heritage* of your child! The *Czar* himself will be to her, a *father!*"——And Apraxin held up before the dying Prince, the pictures which showed him the dear one whose love had long made his earthly happiness, and the beautiful face of the *little Princess of Alaska!*

The dying soldier struggled to rise. They lifted him gently, and, as his nerveless fingers strove to grasp the treasures offered to him, the seal of silence was at last broken!

"*Beatrice! Irma! Blessed loved ones—Tell—them—innocent!*" and clasping in his dead fingers, the faces he had pictured in his heart for the four lonely, silent years of a convict's slavery—the *Czar's humblest messenger* lay dead,—with the light of a distant love *shining on his pale soldierly face!*—

"*It is over!*" said the Surgeon, as he led the stern old Commander away, whose tears now veiled the dead man's face! He was himself—a *husband* and a *father!*

CHAPTER XIV.

VERA NARYCHKINE'S CONFIDENCE—AN ARTIST'S ORDEAL—THE PRINCESS OF ALASKA — OLGA ORLOF'S IMPERIAL FRIEND—AN AMERICAN MILLIONAIRE'S GALLERY—RANDOLPH'S NEW ORDER—THE LOST HERITAGE—THE NEW RUSSIAN MINISTER.

"I wonder what Madame Narychkine can mean by all this!" and Arthur Randolph smoothed his Vandyke beard impatiently. He was lying on a couch covered with a superb leopard skin, and his artist eye strayed idly around the most luxurious studio in Dresden!—Randolph watched the white ash thicken on his cheroot before he found an answer to his *own* question.

"I *must* see *you* at once alone! I can give you *an hour*, before *the Ball!* Come to the Legation at ten! Do not fail me!"—Vera.—

The successful painter sprang up as lithe as a tiger, for a sudden thought had seized him.

"*Can it be?*—Let me see! It is *six years* since poor Maxutoff's death! But Vera Narychkine has been stationed continuously at Athens! She will surely now see *Irma* soon at the Winter Palace! But, if Countess Olga is right, they have *not met*,—since the *great mockery* of poor Gregory's funeral! What can it be? Some new sorrow?—Does the curse of Zubow still linger?"

He picked up the dainty billet of the very wittiest and most brilliant of Russia's woman champions in the world's diplomatic arena!

"If there's *a postscript*, I suppose that the secret of the riddle may be *read there!* Ah! *Yes!*"

And, below the firm, slashing signature of Vera

Narychkine, ..e saw traced the astonishing words "This is to be, at once, *a confidence* and *a warning! Not a word to Dimitri!*"—

Randolph smiled in spite of himself!

"She is *finer* than even Madame Ignatief, the fair Countess whose gentle manner so well covered the cool adroitness of the Muscovite diplomate. For long years, even in hostile London, that mistress of the highest ambassadorial craft, was supposed to be only a mere water lily,—a graceful nullity floating on the stagnant tide of fashion's rich flood!"

He paced the room in a sudden disquietude!

"It is, of course, *in regard to Irma*, that she would speak to me! We have no *other* secret!"

His eyes rested lovingly on the treasures of that world-renowned studio, where even the kings of art now came to wonder and admire! Some subtle spirit of fire and flame had seemed to animate the spirited young American in his onward and upward career. Adored by his fellows of the craft, a romantic, self-contained, social mystery, Randolph was always a stranger to the swarming salons of the beau monde where the votaries of his genius would have gladly poured out the honey of their flattery!—

Few men of thirty could so calmly ignore the soft advances of the haughty German aristocracy,—the incense of the women of that higher world whose cachet is a seal of modern nobility! But his splendid wolf dog, and his trusty Lithuanian blood horse, were his only daily companions!

"Is it that he absolutely *hates* our sex?" cried a pretty French Countess, snapping her pearl mounted fan in vexation, as Randolph turned away, at a grand ball, with grave but chilling courtesy from the whispered summons to her side, and resisted the invitation of her

sparkling eyes! The pretty Gaul seldom found the Sons of Adam callous to her charms!—

"He's a *good fellow*,—Arthur, but I fancy that this studio life is not a fitting prelude to *society!*" answered Reginald Mowbray, of the English Legation, calmly appropriating the vacant chair.

"I crossed the Atlantic once with him, when he returned from the old Admiral's obsequies! *Men* find him a thorough-going character, but I fancy, Countess, that all *your* charming sex care for, is a man who dangles! Now, Madame, Randolph is really a *serious fellow!* 'Art is his mistress,' he says, and *trust me*, he is spurred on by a hidden fiery ambition!—For a Yankee, *very uncommunicative*—too!"

And, so it was, that handsome, and already distinguished;—a gold medallist and a man of a cosmopolitan renown,—Arthur Randolph's social life was only a nullity! *A memory and a sigh!* He had *never* reached out for newer friendships, since Countess Olga Orlof, called by new duties, left Dresden for St. Petersburg! Often, in his lonely walks, Randolph would pass the dear old house still sacred to the memory of ill-starred Princess Beatrice Maxutoff! It was in fulfillment of the promise made long years before under the northern lights, that Olga Orlof departed, at the wish of Princess Narychkine, to rule the storied old granite keep as its mistress!

"I shall only have *two* children now, instead of *one*! Arthur," gently answered the Countess, when Randolph dared to hint that in her own royal beauty of woman's meridian, she might link her life to that of some noble henchman of the Czar!

"Alas! my friend, *Love and I are strangers now!*—When Zubow struck down the head of the house of Orlof, he doomed *me* to a life of renunciation, to a lonely

widowhood, whose only crown of joy will be to see my *poor Irma* yet, a bright jewel of the Russian Court, and to know that *Fedor Orlof's son* is the truest cavalier in the glittering ring, around the White Czar!—*You* are the only brother of my heart! How can I *ever* repay you for the tender devotion of all these long years at Dresden! I shall watch your star shining on high in the skies of art, and, *to my dying day,* I can never forget the loyal, gallant American who defended our rights, even *at the risk of his life!*"

From St Petersburg, Arthur Randolph learned all, in the sisterly letters of lovely Irma, *now* an especial protegée of the Empress:—and from the constant bulletins of the magnificent Countess Olga, whose station near the Czarina was that of a lofty friendship! The famous artist sighed over the silent *passing away* of the White Rose of Sitka! In vain, the Czar had tendered *new* dignities, *splendid honors,* rich *rewards*—and a most flattering public recognition to the *widow* of his faithful Governor! The bond of the wedded years between the dead hero of Khokan and his tender wife was far too subtile for even *the Summons of Death* to sever! The beckoning of Gregory Maxutoff's loving hand called his helpmeet away to that silent land where serf and Czar are on a level of nothingness.!——

It was not strange that courtly old Baron Butzow proudly exulted in the tender solicitude of the Czarina, for the *orphaned* Princess of Alaska. "I will warrant *you,* Randolph, that the loftiest alliance in Russia will be *sought out* by the imperial pair to recompense that blow of cruel Fate, which left the rosebud Princess *alone* in the cold world! Friendless, but for *the one star of womanhood,*—Countess Olga!—I have learned from *her* alone, to know how *brave* and *true,* how *grateful* and

how *strong of fortitude* the woman nature can be!"——

"This will be an *ordeal!*" mused Randolph, musing as he dressed himself for the great Legation reception! "I can not *disguise* my feelings from this *sparkling iuquisitor!* Thank Heaven! I am however free to go to Petersburg, *if I should wish!* Shall I see Countess Olga there and beg *her* aid? But what have I to offer brilliant Irma Maxutoff to replace these *dignities* and offset the future which she would forfeit as an *artist's wife?*——A man whose only life work is the simple play *upon seven colors!*" As Arthur leaned back in his carriage, he revolved the delegated responsibility of Countess Olga Orlof! "It is true that she *would aid me,* but as *guardian of this orphaned girl,* could she *ignore her duty?* Irma is born to station, rank and to the personal favor of the sympathetic sovereigns! Even if the Countess used her own potent influence *with the Empress,* would it not finally affect *Stephan's* future? Heaven knows poor Maxutoff and Orlof worked hard enough *together* to gain a princely heritage for their *children!* And that has been *all* lost! The grant seems to have been entirely ignored! I *might* see Dimitri Narychkine, but, though Irma is nearly of *age,* Stephan will not be an officer of the White Guards for *four* years yet! The dashing page and cadet knows as yet, nothing of business! If Irma had a personal fortune *out of the limits of Russia,* I might *venture,*—but *can* I ask her to leave the glittering ring around the throne, and go out hand in hand *with me?* It would be only a sad *Cinderella* awakening! No, I *must* renounce that dream!—— —— —— I *must!*"——

And *yet,* before he left his studio, Arthur Randolph had softly raised a silken curtain which hid from *curious* eyes, the serene beauty of unhappy Beatrice Maxutoff, the splendid loveliness of the 'Waiting' wherein Olga

Orlof's face was immortalized, and there, below these gazed tenderly on the Hebe freshness of the absent woman *he loved*,—once, the *little* Princess of Alaska!—— His heart swelled in a lover's bosom!——

He saw her, before his ardent artist eyes, as the fairest of the beauties of the '*White Room*'!——

But he kept his tryst!

It was with a heavy sigh that he sank down, on his arrival, into the cushioned velvet chair, of the boudoir to which the old Legation butler had led him! The sound of fashion's glittering clans gathering in joy was wafted to him, for *all Dresden*, delighted to honor the fascinating Russian aristocrat who swept on through life —*a graceful conqueror!*

Randolph sprang up in an *ecstacy of delight*, as Vera Narychkine entering unperceived laid her gloved hand on his arm! Her rich robes, the glistening jewels, her provoking attitude, finger on lips, the proud, smiling beauty of her expressive face, were a realization of the highest type of womanly beauty! "*Venus Victrix!*" the painter cried. "*I salute you!*"—and before he had dropped the hand raised to his lips, with her old time dash, Princess Narychkine gaily motioned him to her side.——

"Arthur, you bewitched knight errant! I have but a few moments to give you here *alone*! Now, spare me! Do *not* tell me I am *Greek* in my loveliness! Leave that for the swains of the banal salon *to-night*. I go to our old amily stronghold for a few weeks,—leaving to-morrow evening, so that I may see our noble Olga before the 'foreign service' takes us away for another long period of six years! I had startling news here! I should otherwise have *only asked you*, what messages I should bear to Irma and Olga *for you*, but that, *last night*, Baron de Ribeaupierre, Dimitri's successor at Athens passed here *on his way south*! I was amazed when I

heard him say, laughingly, that he hoped the *next* lady of the Legation would be as fortunate and popular as myself! Not caring to hear a sugary compliment, I was leaving, when in answer to Dimitri's question, he replied: 'I shall *first* present my credentials as minister, and, after my audience with the King, *at once*, make a formal request of the Czarina for the *hand of* Mademoiselle Irma Maxutoff!' As my dear dead mother shared the Czarina's palace life, in her *early wedded days*, I have no doubt but that the Empress *will accord me* the hand of the sweetest girl at Court! But I wish the Empress herself to break the ice with that stately *Countess Orlof* who, as first favorite and the inseparable friend of the Czarina, will surely not refuse *our gracious sovereign!* 'Do you know Princess Irma?' he asked Dimitri. 'Only enough to say that she is a child of heavenly grace and a delicate noble nature.' But my wife is *most tenderly* attached to her!'"

Randolph was pacing the boudoir in a sudden agitation! The mask of the long years was off!—The *stoic indifference* of his self-abnegation vanished *in a moment!*

"*Who is this Ribeaupierre?*" he gloomily demanded.

"Ah! You are *at last* awakened! The bud is *no longer* a mere blossom! The opening flower attracts *keener eyed* lovers!—De Ribeaupierre is an *excellent* parti! Young, handsome, distinguished, he is a really *exalted* character, and his estate in Finland is the *handsomest* show place in all Russia! A man who will go up to the *highest* stations!"——

"You need *not* extol him further! I see that he has in *you*, a powerful ally!"

The hollow groan of the artist in this dismal monologue, brought only a ringing *peal of laughter* from the teasing diplomat!

"I thought that you were wedded *only to your art!*" she answered maliciously!

"Now, do *not be ridiculous*, mon ami, you should be man of the world enough, to know that even *you* must not *presume* upon the unsolicited affections of a *spirited girl!* If Olga, who loves you *deeply*, were not singly devoted to her own duties with the Empress, as well as to that wild young chief of our clan, Stephan, *who is a lively enough charge*, and so engrossed by the *singular friendship* of the Czarina, she would have warned you *herself!* But young and beautiful even as *she is, still* she lives in Shadowland yet, with my poor Uncle's memory! *It is a needless* self-sacrifice!"—

"The dearest dream of *my* heart is to see Stephan the star of our young chivalry;—Irma also must be made happy, and I would also be glad to see Olga finally *yield* to the Empress' *entreaties!* General Apraxin will be soon made Governor General of Turkestan! At Tashkend, Countess Olga would hold almost a royal court! Apraxin has laid down his laurels at *her* feet, and begged her to accept the Vice-regal throne of Central Asia! But *ardent, loyal* and *mystic*, Olga said only: 'General Apraxin, let me cherish the wreath of your devotion and friendship in *my grateful heart!* But *you* are worthy of an affection *all your own!* Trust to me, my friend, when I say that *a woman loves but once!*'"

Vera gazed earnestly at Randolph who was greatly agitated! "Did *he*, too, love *the matchless Olga?*"

"Now, I have always admired *you*, 'my American cousin!' Do not let my gay Dimitri know of *this revelation!* For De Ribeaupierre has already poured out his confidence to my loyal husband. Dimitri is so engrossed *with me*," the mocking beauty cried, "that he is really blind to all *other love!* I warn you that this gallant

diplomatic suitor is so thoroughly unobjectionable, that *even I*, could not advise any *personal* opposition to his manly and open suit! But I know that *you* love this dainty child, and I warn you—in time! Is it not so?"

Her kindly eyes were beaming!——

"*I do! I must not lose her!*" replied Randolph, with an air of tragic earnestness.——

"Then, *be ruled by me!* Let *me* be the fairy godmother here! Shake off the Hamlet-like sadness which my timely warning has suddenly cast over you! A voyage *to St. Petersburg* will teach you how much nature has improved even your *veiled picture!*"

Randolph crimsoned. Vera Narychkine's light foot was gaily beating in time with the exquisite dreamy music floating through the great hall of ceremony.

"*Yes, sir!* You were out when I violated *the temple of your Diana!* Now, cease your useless *fetich worship!* I *now* invite you *as my guest* to sojourn with us at Petersburg until we go to Washington! You must come or you may *lose* Irma!"—

Arthur Randoph sprang to his feet. His ardent lover soul leaded up into a *hopeful activity!* Vera Narychkine bit her lips.

"I *am* maladroite! I did not wish to tell you until the Foreign Office had *gazetted us!* But I shall be *the mistress of the Russian legation* in your own *strange new land* for the next six years."—

"*I have a plan!*" hastily cried Randolph. "I see that there *must be no thwarting* of the *Czarina!*"

In an humble tone, he entreated:

"Princess Vera! *You* can save us all! Ask Irma to go as your guest, *for a single season! I* can persuade Countess Olga to go to America and look into the *Maxutoff grants* then! Her own boy's interests will sway

her! In *this* way, I can gain time to teach Irma to love *me!* I will go over to America! Who knows what *the present value* of these lands and privileges may be? *Will* you aid me?"

The sound of laughing voices calling on the fair diplomat was heard!——

Vera frowned in mock majesty.—

"You have been a *laggard* lover!—You do not *deserve* it,—but I *will help you,* Arthur! Come on with me to St. Petersburg,—and *the fairy godmother* shall be your steady ally."——

"Do *you* think that Irma loves me?" ardently cried Randoph, covering the pretty hand with grateful kisses of the most unjustifiable *warmth!*—

"I think that is a question which you should ask of the young lady *herself!*—But you may *hope,*—I think! You *will* come then?"——

"I have been blind,—*foolish! Is it too late?*"—cried Randolph, in a sudden tumult of feeling, as the graceful young matron vanished, her sweet face beaming from the door, in a last glance of malicious mirth!——

"He *seems* to be awake now to the fact that he has *another earthly divinity* besides the pulseless ideal of his art!" And Vera Narychkine resolutely proceeded to extend her personal conquests, into unknown regions, among willing legions of new admirers!——

Randolph fled away hastily from the ball and, if there had been ought of *self-confidence,* in his *past* relations with Irma Maxutoff,—the sweet unrest of his dreams proved that the little Princess of Alaska sat upon a throne *all her own,* in his *awakened* heart! His trust was great in the *all-compelling Vera Narychkine!* "That is a *wonderful woman!* A modern magician! She bends all

hearts to her by the provoking witchery of her diamond intellect and ready wit!"

Entered into the race for the lovely prize, Randolph became a squire of dames *at a single bound!* A telegram of judiciously veiled words to Countess Olga,— a singularly formal note to *Princess Irma, the rose of roses,*— and the homage of a superb basket of flowers, to his spirited feminine adviser, *the future Ambassadress,*—all these were signs of a *growing cardiac fever!*——

His joyous whistle of his old-time student songs echoed through the vaulted studio, and *astonished his subordinates,* as he hastily made preparations to leave his sanctum for a short period!——

"I will not be away *long!*" he murmured, as he swept a few private sketches and some personal articles into an old cabinet!—And *yet,* something in his heart told him that before the bright conjurings of his artist brain would "flit palpably" before him, there again, the answer of Irma Maxutoff's eyes would tell him whether the heart hidden longing of years *would be* attained! "But one thing want these banks of Rhine, thy gentle hand to *clasp in mine!*"—He suddenly ceased Byronizing, as, with a breezy clatter, Hugh Wilde, gentlest and kindest of the sons of Anak, a *bad* artist, but a *good* fellow, burst into the room.——

"Hello! What's this? Packing up! *Stop it, I say!* Arthur! I have *great news* for you!—"Take a pipe! Sit down! Collect your thoughts! And *be sensible!*" Arthur replied. "I am *only* going to take a run of two or three weeks, on a sketching tour to *the Baltic!*" Randolph dissembled, for he would not let his bantering friend even dream that he sallied forth to the chase of the "*fair dove,—the fond dove!*"—"You must *stop* all this! I left *Bradford, the great California millionaire,*

at the Club! He says that he is *an old friend of yours!*—Tremendously rich fellow! *Gold mines* and *things* at *the North Pole!* He is coming down here to see you *now!*"

"*Ah!*" Randolph suddenly dropped a handful of sketches! "*Paul Bradford!* The man who was once a *great newspaper power* out west!—Is *he* here?" The words '*gold mine*' brought back Paul's strange quest at Sitka! "*Why! Yes!*" rattled on Hugh. "He's no end of a financial swell *now!* And Goupil has been *nursing* him at Paris! He had letters from them to me! I wish that he would buy my "*Spartacus and the Gladiators!*" Do you know that he *married the widow* of some rich Pacific Coast Senator, and thus fell *into an enormous property!*"——

"Oh! *I see now!* 'Funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth, etc., etc.,'" replied Randolph, lightly.—"I *must* see that man! Gold mines! He may know of *Treasure Island!*' Could I *trust him?* Success has simply fastened his egoism, I suppose, with diamond rivets! What does he want of *me?*"

"He wishes one of *your famous portraits!* Of the *Senator's widow,* the well preserved architect of the fortunes of the *House of Bradford! So he said!* He glories as an American in *your great name! Now,* Arthur," and Hugh sobered down, "I would like to exchange my 'Spartacus' for *visible coin* of the realm! Don't forget *me! There they come!*—He has a *stately following!*"——

"He shall certainly take away your revolted *professional fighter!* That is, if *I* can educate him!"

Arthur glanced around, but Hugh had discreetly vanished! He knew every secret of the quaint, old den to which Randolph clung, as the theatre of his early heart struggles!

"This visit *means something!* Let me *see!*—It is

twelve years since *we met!*" and Randolph, armed in his mind, was gravely dignified as he met the man whose adverse fortunes had so strangely prospered!—It was *the same Bradford,* but now set in the decorous solidity of a middle-aged '*First Citizen!*'

As Paul presented his wife, Arthur rapidly inventoried the surroundings of the favored child of the fickle goddess. "*A neutral shade!*" he thought, as he observed the deferential pride of the late Senator's widow, now an appendage of the stern, decisive Bradford! Her staff was a hollow-eyed woman relative! "*The usual dependent!*" fancied the artist,—there was a Secretary, (a standing advertisement), and also a glib courier who spread his *lack of knowledge* over *many* subjects in *different places!*—"The financial *lion* and his *train of smaller animals!*"

Randolph admired the perfect self-possession of the journalist capitalist, who frankly explained, in a few words, his desire to obtain a portrait of Mrs. Bradford.

After the usual visit of inspection, Paul Bradford turned from a close inspection of Randolph's boyish Sitka sketches.

"Do you do anything *in landscape* now?" he asked.

"Yes; but only *as a diversion!* I do not have the time for natural studies!" the artist replied.

"*These are wonderful!*" said Bradford. "I go up there *every year* now to look at *my mine!* The *town* is very little changed!"

"*Are there mines in Alaska,—gold* mines?" queried Arthur, turning away his face, for his voice quivered!—

"Our company has the *largest gold mill in the world* up there! Two hundred and fifty stamps hammering away night and day on Douglas Island! It is the *greatest* quartz mine known!"

"I never heard of a *gold mine on an island!* What is it *like?*" The blood was eagerly racing through the artist's veins!

"Oh!" Paul turned to Randolph, "It is only a *small, bare, green island,* high and hump-shaped, like a camel's back! A few straggling pines cover the ravines, and the ore so near it is tumbled *right into* the mills! It *is* a wonder!"

Bradford proudly thought of the half million dollars a year, divided now among the *survivors* of the "Associates!"

"I consolidated *two* interests!" he reflected, his mind reverting to the far-away mound where the defunct Senator now lay under a marble obelisk, bearing the most complimentary excerpts from that great man's *too brief* career.

Arthur Randolph had recognized at once the careless descriptions of the *lost island of Maxutoff and murdered Orlof!* He had carefully examined, long years before, all the papers *now* lying neglected in the Imperial Bank at St. Petersburg! He drew his breath hard as he thought of Irma's *stolen heritage,*—of *plundered Olga* Orlof,—of the fatherless *Stephan,* and of the *dark treachery* which lured Maxutoff *to his death!*

"*My God!* I remember now! This man spent nights with *Zubow on his ship!*" And the artist mentally promised he would make a test of *Bradford's nerves* later!—But he now only calmly said:—"I presume that you *purchased* the mine after *I left Alaska!* Did you ever find your man '*French Pete*'?"—

The millionaire *started* and cast a piercing glance at the unconscious artist!——

"Oh! *He* died later, years afterward, at the mine!" finally replied Paul. "He wandered *all around the Arc-*

tic, and Caldwell, our agent, at last bought out 'French Pete's' title for four hundred dollars! He was a half crazed drunkard!—The mine was *really* discovered on grants of land belonging *to my wife's first husband!*—I have improved and developed *it,* among *other* Alaskan interests!"——

"*Just a bit too pompous!*" fancied Randolph, in whose heart a sudden vow was registered. He watched Bradford keenly!—He reflected, "I will go to Russia! I will get *the papers* from Olga! I will then go on to Washington! I will secretly examine *these famous grants* of the late *Statesman!*—If there should be a chance to establish *the Russian patent!* But I must work *in silence!* I will have to hoodwink *this fellow!* Yes; I *will* paint that portrait! And he *shall* also buy 'Spartacus'!"

This artistic vengeance as to Wilde's *dreadful* canvas was a fitting reward for much past iniquity! But the "mills of the gods" *do* grind *at last!*——

"I am going away for a fortnight, Mr. Bradford, and if *it would not disarrange your plans,* I could give your wife her sittings later!"

"We shall be *in Dresden a whole month,* and you will find me, *at your disposal,* if I wait here even *another* month!" cried the delighted relict of the wary Senator. "If you will kindly come and breakfast with us to-day, we can *easily* arrange our future plans!"

Arthur saw his good angel beckoning him on!——

Bradford was so decorously *urgent* in seconding his wife, that Arthur finally sent a few lines to *his fairy godmother!* A sudden thought had seized him, as he saw the millionaire's party eagerly regarding the silken curtain veiling his hidden treasures! He drew the cord and then narrowly watched Paul Bradford's face, in silence!——

"Ah! How lovely! *Who* is this exquisitely beautiful woman?" Mrs. Bradford enthusiastically cried.—

"*Why, that is* old *Baranoff Castle!*" eagerly said Paul Bradford, stepping quickly forward.—That is surely *the Russian Countess,*—the *mysterious beauty! Where is she now?* I thought that *she was dead!*—Eben Tomlinson *sought vainly for her* at St. Petersburg! *He* could gain *no news* of her."—

"I painted the lady some *years ago,* on her return from Sitka!"—quietly returned Randolph. "The picture has made a great success under its title of 'Waiting!' It was at the *Paris salon!*"

The millionaire was keenly regarding the artist.

"The *Princess* Maxutoff,—excellent—*excellent!* And *who* is *this beautiful girl?*"——

Bradford seemed lost in wonderment!—

"It is *her* daughter,—once the pretty child whom they called '*the little Princess of Alaska!*'"—

"Strange! *Strange!*" murmured Bradford. "They are *both* dead,—*the parents. A very sad story!* I *heard it* in America from my partner, Phillippi."

Arthur Randolph's blood boiled at the cool insolence, with which the triumphant schemer gazed at the pictured victims of the unpunished rascality of years! He swore an oath deep in his heart, as he let the silken veiling fall!

"If there is any joint in your armor, my wily friend, I will thrust home, *for Irma Maxutoff's sake!* By Jove! I will confide in *Dimitri!* I will go direct by steam from Cronstadt to Hamburg, and then examine the Washington records, while this villain is disporting himself!"

"But *where* are his fellow scoundrels?—Are Tomlinson and Phillippi still interested in the Arctic?" carelessly asked the artist as they descended the stair.

"Oh! yes; Eben manages the whole business of the associates at San Francisco! And Phillippi is now on his annual inspecting tour."——

"Then, the *coast is clear!*" mused Arthur, as he entered the landau. "I will have some of the Admiral's old coast survey officers copy the maps and papers. I can hold this family here in Europe, waiting for the portrait, *thanks to the lady's fancy,*—and I *will* win if Dimitri will only *help me!*"—

"By heaven! *The Emperor's tenth!* Yes! He *can* demand a hearing of the State Department! The dangerous Senator is *dead!* Ah! The fairy Godmother *shall* help me here! If I can *force* a recognition of the grant, then, I *can demand* of Countess Olga some recompense!"

He thought of the little hand, which trembled as it lay in his own at the parting!—

"Do you spend much of your time at the mine?" Randolph asked, as the carriage drove up to the hotel.

"I go up occasionally and take a look.—We have a comfortable bungalow there. But I am not needed. The output is regular. I have some splendid photographs of the whole location and its varied scenery.—It is *exquisitely* beautiful!"

"Are you not ever annoyed by American miners,—prospectors?" Randolph questioned.

"*Not a bit!* We have things *all our own way! We* have developed the real resources of Alaska! Even the Government recognizes what we have done!"

Arthur grimly set his teeth, as he vowed to have things *another way,*—if the gracious fairy Godmother would aid!

"Ah!" he smiled. "The gay queen of hearts will give me *carte blanche!* For the new Russian Minister at

Washington will be a great personage,—and he will act under the all-compelling spell of Vera Narychkine, *the imperious!*"—

When it was agreed, after the dejeuner, that the wished for portrait would be the next serious work of the famous artist.—Mrs. Bradford retired jubilant, leaving the gentlemen to their cigars.

"Your plan will suit us, exactly!" the dowager graciously said. "We will now extend our tour to South Germany and Italy, and on your return from your vacation, we will stay later here in Dresden,—until you need *me* no more!"—

Arthur admired the detailed views which the millionaire exhibited to his eager gaze of the beautiful scenery of Lynn Canal.

"Ah! *here is* the best one!" proudly said Bradford.—"I can give you a *whole set* of these!—For I find I have duplicates! *This is the island,* and our mill and its romantic water frontage!"—

The "high green island, bare, with its scattered pine trees," was there, and the picture trembled strangely in Arthur's eager hand!——

"Exquisite!" *A witching scene!* he murmured.

"By the way, Randolph!" sharply broke in Paul; "where *is that daughter of the Maxutoffs?* Do you know?"

"I have lost sight of them, for some years!" steadily answered the painter, as he looked squarely in Bradford's eyes.

The millionaire was uneasy. He fingered the views, as if some haunting shadows were flitting over his memory. Arranging a complete set of photographs for the artist, he absently spoke to himself:

"I should like a good picture of *the greatest gold mine* in the world!"

He observed Randolph attentively studying the memory haunted scenes!

"Could *you* paint this particular view you approve so much, from your memory of the local colors, and aided by *this* picture?"——

"Certainly!" smiled Randolph. It is *hardly high art*,—but"——

"*Never mind!* I wish a masterpiece, if you can create one. Call this *my order!* I will give you *carte blanche*, and take the picture, *whenever* you can send it! The island has made my fortune, and I can *never* forget it!"—

"And *I* intend that you *never shall!*" thought Randolph, as he took his leave. "My new order *suits me exactly!*" he gaily said at parting!—

"Fortune favors the brave!" laughed Vera Narychkine, when Randolph recounted all to her. The artist was all ready for the road.

"You must take *Olga* at once into your confidence; we will together manage to delay the marriage offer of de Ribeaupierre! *You* must get all the deeds and papers! You can then run over to Washington, verify the entire facts, and, if the Russian Minister *can not* enforce the Czar's rights and save our Irma's dowry, *I will not call him my husband!*—Yes; *Her dowry shall be saved!* They would never dare to face exposure!—For the American Government might then declare *the patent of their lands void!*"

"And *Irma's love?*" cried Arthur.

"That is a delicate subject for *you* alone to investigate, when she is my guest at Washington!" laughed beautiful Vera. "For when you have finished this portrait of Madame the Millionaire, and made the island glow on your canvas for your old secret enemy, Bradford, *you may come*, Sir, to the Russian Legation at Washington."—

"I will guarantee you that you will find Olga, Stephan and also your Irma *there* for a visit to signalize *my social debut* under the Stars and Stripes! The Empress will deny me nothing, and I shall artfully ask that Cadet Count Stephan be given a leave of absence too, and bring them all over! That will cut off the sighing Russian swains from annoying your Irma! But,—Arthur,—*not one word,*—even to Dimitri, *about the results of your flying trip!* For, if the fact were known that the Emperor had rights also (the tenth), the island question might pass *out of Dimitri's hand!* We will face them all at Washington, *these Yankee schemers,* and I will see that the Empress aids me as far as she can!"—

"Vera, you are *an angel!*" cried Arthur, as he kissed her pretty hand.

CHAPTER XV.

ARTHUR RANDOLPH'S DISCOVERY—THE TREATY—A VISITING PRINCESS—THE YOUNG CHIEF OF THE ORLOFS—AT THE LEGATION BALL — THE EMPEROR'S TENTH — PAUL BRADFORD'S OLIVE BRANCH—THE PRINCESS OF ALASKA'S DOWER—COUNTESS OLGA MAKES A PRESENT—A CLEAR TITLE !

Ten days after Paul Bradford had given the artist lover his carte blanche for the landscape of Golden Island, a serious conference was finished at the Orlof mansion in St. Petersburg, when Randolph said to Countess Olga and the over-joyed ambassadress:

"I am *now* ready to start for Washington! There remains nothing further for me to do here. The lawyer has finished all *his* researches, and *I* will, *therefore*, take the steamer for Hamburg *to-morrow!* So, I can continue my voyage from there, unobserved, to Washington. When I have seen the legal records at the national capital, I shall *at once*, return to Dresden, via England! In this way, *even Bradford* can find no apparent method, in my movements!"—

"Are you really all ready, Arthur?" Madame Olga asked with a smile, as she saw the very prettiest of the Empress's rosebuds circling by the library door, in an attempt to improve the waltzing of Cadet Count Orlof! The great hall was their improvised ball room.

"Have you *told Irma yet?*" maliciously remarked Vera Narychkine, as the artist blushed and bowed.—

"Not yet! *I thought*"—stammered Randolph, "that *you* would bring up, at our last dinner, the subject of *our future reunion* at Washington! Does not Irma know

that Countess Olga and young Stephan will grace your first Grand Ball at the Russian Legation?"

He was very anxious. The room seemed *strangely warm* to him!

"I *did* tell her *that*," cheerfully rejoined Vera, "but, *as to you*, I supposed that you had announced to her, that after finishing the Alaskan millionaire's orders, you would close your studio and return to study the marvels of American art in Washington! Those contract statues, —so satisfactory to the brass founder and stone cutter! Those singularly alarming pictured presentments of the most remarkable looking men, in scenes of varied *national convulsion!* But perhaps you were wise after all, —for De Ribeaupierre himself *returns to-morrow!* So Dimitri tells me! He will, *of course*, see the Empress at once,"—

For *once* in his life, Arthur Randolph was *not gallant*, —in fact, he *never heard* the remainder of Madame Narychkine's delightfully malicious remarks! A sweet voice called him to his feet, as Irma Maxutoff, the Princess of Alaska, with her lovely face eager in excitement, clasped her jewelled fingers around his arm.

"*Cousin Arthur!* You surely are *not going away?* What is this that Stephan says? Why! We have only *begun my lessons!* I am to be *the only* great Court Artist."—

"We must finish our studies then in the spring,—*at Washington!*" said Randolph, appealing vaguely to the two matrons, who had now walked to the other end of the great library.

But Vera Narychkine seemed strangely intent on explaining a wonderful old line engraving of "Joseph and his Brethren,"—which had *suddenly* become an object of great interest to *Madame Orlof!*

When the ladies had finished their crucial examina-

tion of *this marvel of art*,—the anxious artist and the Maid of Honor had *mysteriously* disappeared! The service of tea at eleven o'clock brought Madame Narychkine to an obscure corner of the drawing rooms, with some classic stock remarks about "*beauty sleep!*"

As Irma Maxutoff stood on the stair, and merrily bade the others "Good Night," she shyly turned, a vision of glowing beauty, and even Arthur Randolph, lost in love's dream, noted the gentle earnestness of the voice with which she faltered her adieu to him: "It seems *so strange*,—that you are going away—*now!*——

"Olga!" cheerfully whispered Vera Narychkine, as she threw her arms around her loving friend when they parted, in her boudoir, "I fancy that *we need not fear* De Ribeaupierre's coming!"

And the stately beauty, known now as "the wonderful Countess Orlof,"—*of the marble heart*,—(so sighed her unsuccessful lovers) laughed as she said: "Irma has discovered *at last* that she has a heart!"

There was in fact, very little fear of this particular handsome young Russian Lochinvar lingering in Arthur Randolph's breast, as he neared New York, after a terrific winter voyage. For, though the stars of heaven were hidden by gray wrack and leaden skies, *in his heart*, the twin stars of Irma Maxutoff's eyes bade him "Wait and Hope!"—

"I will not ask her to join her life with mine, until I have made these cold, sly schemers disgorge their precious plunder, torn from this gentle orphan!" —

"*What a mystery*—the North Pacific!" mused Randolph, as he examined the superb pictured scenery of the fiords of Holy Cross Sound. "The greed and craft of the *Yankee miner* supplements to-day, the dark schemes of the old time Russian *fur speculator!* It is *gold now*,—

magic gold,—which will make every silent recess of Alaska's canons and river gorges echo to the step of the indomitable prospector. One hundred years ago, it *was* the search for *fur!* What a history! Greed, lust, war, butchery and drunkenness followed hardy Tchirikoff's discovery of the new court fur, the *priceless sea otter,* in 1741—when he returned to Avatcha Bay with a load of the mysterious '*mandarin*' furs—then so called! For the few samples which had reached the crowned heads of Europe *up to that time,* were rare diplomatic presents of the *great nobles of China!* They were animal stragglers, caught on the Kurile Islands, or off Korea! But, as the chase of the *little sable* led the Cossack robbers *on towards* Khamschatka, *across Asia,*—so, from *the lone peninsula of Khamschatka,* the news of Tchirikoff's find of the rich furs aroused Russian greed!"

Emilian Bassof,—building the 'Kapiton' at the Siberian Avatcha Bay,—ventured out, to return richly laden with sixteen hundred otter, two thousand seal and *nearly three thousand* precious blue fox skins! A king's ransom! Fast then, followed after him, the hardy marauders,—daring *all;*—for the 'fur craze' was now on! Fictitious values were set *then* on the otters, since kept up, though *sixty thousand sea otter skins* were later garnered *at one time* in the store house of one robber company! When Stephen Glottof, even a *greater robber,*—built the "Yulian' and crossed the Behring Sea, in 1759, he stumbled on *Nagounalaska Island,* with its bay of otters! He little dreamed when he landed on the Aleutian Islands, wreathed in their perpetual fogs, *that within a hundred miles,* a herd of fur seals worth millions of dollars awaited the *butchers of the future,* in lazy basking on the sandy beaches of lonely St. George and St. Paul Islands! But, on these *three little rocks,* not ten miles

long, the unreaped riches of nature were destined to be a future prize for the corsair and the speculator, and to embroil the wiseacre diplomats of three great countries!—Captain Cook, in the 'Resolution' and 'Discovery'!—missed these floating millions,—as did Martine, the Castilian sailor, *later*, though in 1778 and 1787, they *both* claimed abandoned Unalaska, the *one* for the King of England, and *the other*, in the name of His Sacred Spanish Majesty!——

But, *ten years later* great Alexander Baranoff grasped Alaska for the Russian Crown. Quick-witted, he realized at once that the immense swarms of fur seals had some annual rendezvous! The secret of the fur seals' natural habits remain *even to-day* unsolved! They vanish *now*, for half the year, as completely as in the twenty years when sly old Baranoff used their skins as a "*floating bank currency*" When the rapacity of his hunters thinned out the *nearest* seals, and also drove off the *shy sea otters*, a shipwrecked Aleut, storm-driven in his kayak, told Baranoff on his return, of the *foggy island* with its thousands on thousands of fur seals!——

With true Russian craft, the great Governor decided to find the little island, which the native fancifully called "*Amik!*" The natives, although expert in the natural history of *all other* Arctic animals, fancied that there was an *enchantment* in the spot toward which, from May to November, countless myriads of fur seals swarmed, making the waters alive as they played on the surface!—And, from November to May, the cold, foggy seas were *bare* of even a *single fur seal!* The sandy shores lay all deserted and silent! Ignorant of the habits of the valuable animals, really seeking the *unbroken silence* of the great sandy beaches of the Komandorski and Prybiloff group, to *breed* and *train their*

young;—the superstitious Aleuts thought the seal army *worshiped their own god* at the Island of Amik, which no mortal man would *ever see again!* But this returning Aleut, led *thither* by the God of the Storms, was finally discredited!—A case of traveler's tales! Yet, the aspiring and educated Baranoff guarded all the gossipy secrets! He forced the natives, though ignorant of navigation, to guide *several* expeditions which he had sent out from 1781 to 1786!——

Some peculiarity of the animal, or an exceptionally favorable refuge, alone, explained to him a mystery, yet partially unsolved *to-day.*——But, by dint of cruising in every direction, Prybiloff, the Governor's confidant, in 1786, landed, *at last,* on the fabulous "Amik",—finding merely a fog-hidden island, which he, *at once, occupied,* —giving to it the name of his ship, "St. George," and ultimately finding the companion rock, "St. Paul!" *On these two islands,* not *fifty square miles* in extent, Baranoff's men the next year, easily killed a *half million fur seals! Five millions of dollars* in value was the catch of the *first* season! The great Viceroy protected the two islands long known as "Baranoff's Bank," and it was only after he was drowned *on his homeward voyage,* his great wealth *perishing with him,* that the *unlicensed* butchery of the wonderful animals began! In 1805 the Czar regulated the cruel slaughter, and forty thousand a year *only* were taken up to 1865!——

"*What a coincidence!*" thought Randolph, who had learned at Petersburg every secret of the royal archives, and had studied the huge musty folios of the Imperial laws and records! "*Baranoff was drowned,* and *his* vast fortune whelmed in the cruel sea! Maxutoff *betrayed* and *sacrificed,* and the Emperor's tribute *stolen!* A vengeance of providence seems to follow the *unpunished*

brutalities of the cruel Russians, *in the Arctic!* And, *now*, for twenty years, the associates are allowed to take a hundred thousand a year in American waters *alone!*—Between the greed of the Russian and American contractors, and the robberies of the Arctic corsairs, under every flag, the *sea bear or eared seal is doomed!*"——

"Strange theatre of dark deeds *without a name!* The lawless North Pacific!" cried Randolph. "And *yet*, it has been the nursery of *great men!* The simple Greek missionary, Innocentius Veniaminoff, who lived there in the native huts, *clad as an Aleut*, in 1825,—became the Bishop of Alaska, and *later* the Metropolitan of Moscow! He was then the *only man in the world* to whom Russia's haughty Czar, the lord of sixty realms bowed his head *in humble contrition!* And to *what future use* will the *princes of Alaska*, these banded Russian and American schemers, put their wealth gleaned from the floating millions of fur seal and from the *golden island*, robbed from the *orphaned Princess!*"———

It was easy for Arthur Randolph to foresee that in 1890, even the sleepy "Uncle Sam," would wake up and cut down the slaying of the helpless seal to twenty or thirty thousand a year *to prevent their final extinction!*—He easily divined that Russia, England and the United States would, in time, *quarrel bitterly* over the robbery of Nature's *wonderful marine army*, clad in this raiment of price.——

"But," he swore with a heart beating for Princess Irma's past sufferings, "by her murdered father's *honest memory*,—these wretches who have enjoyed the 'golden island' *shall* acknowledge *her* claims, admit *Olga's* rights and return the *heritage* of young Count Orlof!—For, *if I live to face them*, with the records and Russian patents, they *must* share the golden gleanings of these

last years, and also settle with the Imperial Crown of Russia for *its reserved tenth!*"

As Randolph sped to Washington, on safely arriving, he dreamed of the coming final acknowledgment of the title, and that, shining on him were the eyes from which he had drank the delicious knowledge of a *first love!* In secret, he soon delved under the enemy's mines at the national capital. It was only two weeks after his arrival, when he was enabled to send, flashing joy into every heart of the anxious circle at Petersburg, the single word, "Victoria!" It meant that he had verified *every detail* of the original topography and surveys! While his dead uncle's naval associates cheerfully obtained for him every Government chart and survey, in secret, he toiled with flying fingers at the landscape sketch of Bradford's strange heritage! The revenges of Time had given to Paul, the journalistic lobbyist, not only *his own* share, but *all* that the *astute Senator* had struggled for! For the Senator's *wife and wealth* were *both his now!*——

As Arthur gazed at his finished sketch of the "high, bare, green island" with its straggling cleft-hidden pines, *on the eve of his departure,* he received a mail secretly forwarded by his carefully instructed chief student! A courtly letter from Bradford begged him to await the stately subject of the portrait, at the agreed-on time. "I shall *find it necessary* to be in Washington in the latter part of *this winter,* and Mrs. Bradford's chief treasure there will be the *work of your genius!*" so wrote the millionaire from Italy. "And *do not forget my landscape!* I have been elected *President of the Mining Company,* and it will adorn my official sanctum."——

"By Jove!" cried Arthur, ringing for his servant. "I will pack and take the midnight train, and catch the

very first steamer. This acute schemer must not dream of my lingering *here!* And, if he settles here for the season, the time to strike the blow is when he exhibits his stately wife, in her enhanced splendor,—*the Senator's widow,*—for he has *now both* fortunes!"——

Randolph was working with a true Bohemian celerity, when the words "*Senator's widow*" returned to haunt his mind! "I am a child!" he cried, as he threw himself into a chair. "She, the *mining millionaire's wife,* would never have these old scandals re-opened here! It would disgrace her *first husband's still honored memory!* Ah! I *see it all!* If—if Vera Narychkine will only *hold* the Minister firm in our cause!"——

Arthur smiled in spite of his forebodings. "She is the *very essence* of fiery loyalty and supreme dash! Dimitri may serve *the Czar,* but Madame Narychkine *ranks higher* than the wearer of Peter's Crown!"

It was indeed true that the all-compelling beauty *continually interpolated* her *personal* commands into the high-sounding phrases of the Foreign Office! And Vera Narychkine *always* worked her mysterious will!

"I will *paint her* a better picture of this storied island than even Bradford's *carte blanche* can command,—if,—she *aids me to frighten* this robber into doing justice to my Irma!"——

Mr. Arthur Randolph, artist, did not conceal from his *own* inner consciousness, that in some vague, indefinite manner, he trusted to the beautiful Narychkine also to *shorten* the pathway to a settlement! "If the *two Governments* begin to officially investigate the legality and priority of these claims, Irma and I may die 'maid and bachelor' long before the diplomatic muddle would ever be finished! If I can frighten Bradford into seeing that our side has a *clear and prior title,* then, this resolute

scoundrel is sensible enough to avoid his *public disgrace*, and quietly make a just settlement! But, he must be first *brought to his knees!*" And he sighed for the dashing Vera's aid.

On his voyage back over the wild Atlantic, Randolph waited, chafing in his heart, till he could telegraph the millionaire from England of his readiness to execute the portrai .

"It will be easy for me to please *him*, as the island landscape will bring all his life's victories up continually. —And he will fancy that I have *lost no time!* For the Golden Island order was *ready!*"—

There was no happier man in London than Randolph, when, at his club, he received the answers from St. Petersburg, to his dispatches sent from Liverpool to Madame Narychkine:

"Meet us *at the* Russian Embassy *in Paris!* We *all* sail next week for Washington."—

Handsome Dimitri Narychkine marvelled at the many mysterious conferences which tied his fair wife and Countess Olga to the returning artist, when they happily met at the world's gay capital.

"I am certainly indebted to *you*, Randolph, for it allows me to escort alone the *very prettiest woman in Paris!*"

The laughing diplomat applied himself to gaining a knowledge of all the vagaries of an emancipated Maid of Honor, in closely watching the strangely jubilant little Princess of Alaska! She shyly avoided Arthur.—

"I am really glad, for the credit of the diplomatic corps, that she is not a member of the Legation family," said Dimitri, "for——

—"Your fairy protegée has purchased *chiffons enough* to fill the gun deck of a frigate!"

Vera Narychkine looked meaningly at Countess Olga and then shook a warning finger! She well knew *whose* stored up wealth had indulged the beautiful orphan's every whim! — But, Narychkine, whose motto was "*Pleasure first, business afterwards*" though fond of dallying in delightful Paris, was finally forced to set forth to his *distant post* at Washington!

"I travel *a la Grand Turque!*" he laughed, while Randolph's pleading voice was murmuring a last adieu to Irma, at Havre. Surrounded by his three lovely representatives of patrician Russia, the new Minister sailed away in triumph, not forgetting a last, meaning reference to the magnificence of a splendid ring, which *now* sparkled on Princess Irma Maxutoff's slender hand!

"I did not *know* that artists were such Aladdins!" he whispered, teasingly, at dinner, and *then,* regretted his gay sally, for the beautiful crimson glow on Irma's cheeks told him that he had *at last* fathomed the secret of the long conferences! Afar, lonely and anxious, speeding to Dresden, Randolph reviewed every detail of his *verified* researches!

"There is *no* ultimate escape for Bradford and his partners! The tide is setting homeward now, and bearing my darling Irma's ships *in from sea!*"

He resolutely addressed himself to the painting of the portrait of Madame Bradford, when the millionaire and his train arrived from Italy.—A feverish haste burned in his veins,—the wild glow of an unwonted enthusiasm,—for, as the glowing colors sprang to life under his genius touch, he joyously recalled that *every day* brought him nearer to the time when he should unmask the batteries of attack, and face the man *openly*, whose unjust stewardship had robbed the darling woman he so *desperately* loved!

"I will *never* claim her as my wife, if I *fail!*" the anxious lover confided to his own heart, as he read, at last, the letters announcing the opening glories of Madame Narychkine's social reign. The enthusiastic society reporters of Washington had already seated *Madame Vera* on the *highest possible* throne! The state and future dignity of the young Chief of the Orlofs was *also* a fruitful theme, for the vivacious young Count was enjoying to the full the leave of absence granted him, at the wish of the gracious Empress!

"I have *designedly* kept *our* beloved Olga, and *your* Irma, '*en retraite*,' until your unsuspecting millionaire shall come home to face the one great ordeal of his life! *I have a surprise in store for you*, my dear Arthur, and *Olga and I* only wait *now* for *your* coming! We have received even *more* than the courtesies due to my Dimitri's official position; and, under pretense of recalling our old Alaskan residence, we have personally examined the official maps and charts, and also the records of the Land Office! The mere name of the Minister (*poor, dear, unsuspecting Dimitri*) has opened to us *every* record! We trust, however, to *no one* here! You must not betray our plan *even to my husband*, until we have thrown off the mask! I intend to give a Grand Ball at the Legation, *on your return*, and shall not introduce Olga nor Princess Irma Maxutoff into society, until the millionaire Bradford can meet them, *under the shadow of the Russian colors*, in the Czar's Legation! You *must* quickly finish your picture, and then *come* at once!"——

"Magnificent! I shall *never* cease to be proud of the possession of this superb portrait!"

The enthusiast was Paul Bradford, who, with a circle of admiring connoisseurs, viewed the portrait of the

woman who had solidly riveted the chains of his fortune!—For, summoned by an urgent cablegram, the millionaire was *en route to Washington!* While the Court circle of Madame Million's feminine flatterers were crowding in ecstacy around the noble finished work, Paul Bradford drew Arthur Randolph aside, into his little artist sanctum.

"I have left the shipping of this gem,—Randolph, to *your friend* Mr. Hugh Wilde, whose 'Spartacus' I have also purchased, *to please my wife!—It is a great work!*

Arthur bowed to repress a smile of triumph! Hugh's old "reliable" was, in fact, the *colossus of historical pictures! A great work!* Six by ten feet, *it was large enough* to do ample justice to the revolted chief and his motley crew!——

"I have, at least, made *Wilde's fortune!* May I do as much for my *own Irma*" thought Arthur, as the millionaire regally tendered his check for the two works.——

"I leave for Washington *to-morrow* to remain until the adjournment of Congress! I am *only sorry* that I *shall not* see you there!" concluded Bradford.

"I *may be called there* soon by very important business! In *that* case,—I should *most* certainly *see you,*" answered the artist.

"I *hope* so!" the bustling capitalist cordially said, as he seized his hat and gloves.——

"I have *no doubt but that* we shall *meet there, soon,*"—gravely remarked Arthur Randolph, as he stepped out to receive the incense of the adoring women virtuosos.

"I had intended to offer to you a formal dinner, Mr. Randolph," began the delighted lady of the portrait, "but we must hasten on to Liverpool, as our passages are engaged for the *next Cunarder!*"

"In that case, *I will take the French line!*" joyously cried Arthur, as he marked the last fluttering robe disappear. "Now, *clear the decks for action!*"

There was an eager fire burning in his veins, and his eye glittered ominously, when the huge vans of Bradford's luggage passed him in the evening, as he strolled into the great hotel to send a cabled warning to Madame Vera Narychkine.

"I will know whether I am to spend my life alone in sadness or not, before I *see you again!*" murmured Randolph, as he drew the curtain late that night to gaze on the pictured loveliness of the Princess of Alaska!——

"Shall I go on through life worshiping you only as a sweet dream, *my darling*,—or will you be *mine, in very truth?*" he sighed! And it seemed as if the pictured lips *smiled in the loving answer*, which his passionate heart craved! But he resolutely said: "I will *win* you first, my own Irma! *The battle waits!*"

It was the crowning social excitement of the gayest season of the early eighties, which thronged the Russian Legation with the great world of Washington's most exclusive set.—If the blaze of lights, the shimmer of jewels and sheen of richest robes; if the magnetic hum of hundreds of voices, in delighted murmurs, could lend a further charm to Madame Narychkine's ball,—there was *every condition of success* to accentuate the loveliness of the women who were now all eagerly discussing the one topic: "*Who are they?*"—For, after waiting a half hour in the interminable line of carriages, Arthur Randolph finally forced his way *to the front!*

The great artist was already a national favorite, and as he pressed forward, his face pale, his eyes eager and gleaming with a strange fire, he heard *on all sides*, the wonder excited by the *matchless beauty* of Countess *Olga Orlof*, and loveliness of the *Princess Irma Maxutoff!* Laughingly

declining to enlighten the gossips, Randolph at last stood before Vera Narychkine, who had firmly seized a social leadership, admitted without cavil.

The minister, magnificent in his 'grande tenue,' unbent his state to whisper to Randolph: "*Remember*, Arthur! You stop with us, 'en pelite cômité.'—You are to be *Irma's* cavalier! Vera has asked your friends, the Bradfords, to join us!"—The hour had come!——

"*Where* is Irma?" eagerly demanded the artist.——

"She is the queen of the ball! Your gilded American youth may lead you a hard race, my friend! She is *simply ravishing* in her loveliness!" And the gallant Russ sighed that he *could not flirt, himself, with his own wife's second soul!*——

It was a long half hour before, with a beating heart, the lover, in a lull, listened to Madame Narychkine's whispered confidences. "At *one o'clock*, in the small room, you must watch for *my signal!*"

The crisis was at hand! For, on his return, Randolph had found that Paul Bradford and his wife had been drawn into the maelstrom of wiles of the "Petersburg witch!"—as the *envious* called her!——

"All is ready! *I* will take Bradford *alone* into the library at the right time! *Dimitri* will remain with the millionairess, and *Olga*, too, will have all my instructions! We may need *her help!*"——

All in vain, the pleading, passionate music rose and fell around Arthur Randolph, as the kaleidoscopic beauty of the dance led on only from *one* exquisite tableau to *another!* He marked not approving eye, fluttering fan or gentle appealing glance. For a week, he had studied his role with the Queen of Hearts, Madame Narychkine, and, *even now*, he was not master of her *whole plan!* The brief glories of the night were already fading, when, with an excitement he *could not* master, Randolph followed the bidding

of brave Vera's sparkling eyes! Smooth, suave, and triumphant, Paul Bradford shone *at his very best*, in the little circle which was admitted to the especial favor of the patrician hostess! It was with a sudden start that Randolph merely bowed his assent, when Bradford had eagerly whispered to him at the door of the room:

"*I must see you to-morrow; about these lovely strangers?* Why! this is the *very little Princess Maxutoff* whom *I have sought for years!* And I *recognized* the beautiful recluse of Baranoff, too, *at once!*"——

"Was he *already* alarmed?" and yet Randolph could not now manage to warn Princess Vera. Bradford eyed him closely! His eager glances followed every movement of the spirited hostess, as when the supper was concluded, with courtly grace, the ambassadress left the room, on the arm of the delighted Californian millionaire. An almost imperceptible signal from Vera's fan roused the distrait lover! In the eyes of the triumphant Irma, he read but the record of her complete victory of this happy night!—

Arthur had only reached the ball-room when a cloud of cavaliers bore away the "queen of the rosebud garden of girls!"—A decorous voice interrupted his musing, as he stood fondly gazing at the woman he loved. A house butler stood beside him.——

"Madame Narychkine begs your presence *in the library, for a moment!*"

With a resolute step, the artist entered the room where his fair ally now breathlessly awaited him! *To his astonishment*, Bradford was *already* facing Madame Narychkine, like a tiger at bay, while *with her face buried in her hands*, Countess Orlof was seated by the table!

"Will you kindly *lock that door* for a moment?" said Madame Narychkine to Randolph. "I would prefer *not to be interrupted*,—until Mr. Bradford has heard *you?*"

The Minister's wife calmly seated herself, and the regu-

lar movement of her fan showed that *her* self poise was unshaken! But Paul Bradford, in an evil moment, lost the self-control of a life, and turning to Randolph, with a voice choking with rage, harshly demanded:

"What is this I hear of a demand *in your hands*, as to some *pretended* Russian claim on my company in regard to the *title to our mine?*"

"It *means*, Mr. Bradford," calmly rejoined Arthur Randolph, "that I shall, *at once*, file at the State Department, on behalf of the *Princess Irma Maxutoff*, the verified papers of a royal Russian grant, antedating your land entry *by four years?*"

"It is a *trumped up invention*, Sir!" cried Paul! "We *officially* corresponded with the Russian Government, which *disavowed any such claims*, when we made our entry! And, besides, *we* have the deed of the *original* Russian discoverer, Pierre Lefranc!—'*French Pete*,' who"—

A hollow groan from Countess Olga brought Vera and Randolph quickly to her side, as she faltered:

"*Zubow's spy!* The *faithless* comrade! *The man who killed my poor husband!*"

Bradford stood aghast, as Arthur Randolph *now* turned on him, *like a lion!*

"I see *your* own villainy, *you cold hypocrite! You* conspired with those dead scoundrels to rob *this orphan girl!*"

The two men faced each other in a wild deadly hatred! *The mask was off!*

"I have had the original deeds and the Czar's patents, *under my own care*, since *we all left Sitka!* I know *you now*, Paul Bradford, *for a cold-hearted scoundrel!*"

"Why were they not then *recorded properly* at the Russian *capital?*" sneered the millionaire in triumph! "*They are base frauds!*"

"They *were* so recorded, and *your accomplice*, Zubow,

destroyed all the properly kept Sitkan archives, *when he robbed the fur ships!*—When you made your inquiries, Prince Gregory Maxutoff's rights were declared legally forfeited. But *not so*, those of his *wife and heirs* who are named also in the original patents! *They* were valid, for the holders *were innocent!*"——

Bradford staggered back pale, as these words smote on his ear, and stood amazed, as, her eyes flashing, *Countess Olga Orlof* sprang up and *now faced him!* Pointing her finger sternly at him, she said:

"*You and your murderer* partner forgot that *I and my child* were and *are* named equally in the original patents!—that Prince Maxutoff *was pardoned* and *restored* by the Czar to all his rights, *before his death!*—*Your* villainous hand sent *Maxutoff* to his early grave,—and *your partner* murdered *my Fedor!*"—

"*A likely story!*" triumphantly retorted the millionaire. "There were *no* private claims excepted in Baron Stoeckel's official transfer! *I defy you all!*"——

"But the *final* treaty, solemnly executed *three years later*, in 1870, which is the one *formally* ratified by the *two countries*, expressly provides that any claim *acknowledged by the Czar*, shall be *allowed* by the Department of State, and *take precedence* of all subsequent American titles!"

"You have *no such recognition!* It is *too late!* It is impossible! *Orlof was a convict!* His wife and child could have had, and gained, *no* rights! And *you can not bully me* with basing a claim on these forged documents, where the *original* archives were lost at sea *fourteen years ago!* I will fight it *to the last dollar!*"—

Arthur Randolph's head dropped on his bosom in defeat!

Then, the sound of a voice, ringing clear and sharp as a silver bell,—made Bradford's blood chill, *even in his moment of triumph!*—

Madame Narychkine, the Minister's lovely wife, drew *a*

folded paper from the bosom of her dress! She stood before the quaking millionaire, as the very impersonation of "an angel *with a fiery sword!*—

"You are a *cool manipulator*, Mr. Bradford!" she coldly said. "You play your cards *well*, but *I* will take *the last trick!*—You have spoken of Madame Orlof, the *mother* of my guest, Cadet Count Orlof,—who is *now* the head of *our* house,—as *the wife of a convict!* Permit me, before you leave my house *forever*, to say that I will give you only *one* chance to settle for the equal interests of the *Orlof* heirs, and also with the *Princess Maxutoff*, my dear successor as favorite Maid of Honor to the Czarina!"

Bradford grew pale, and his lips trembled!—He muttered: "*The Czarina's friends!*" as the avenging beauty remorselessly continued:

"Fedor Orlof was my beloved uncle, and the Czar has effaced *all* the records and *pardoned* the death of *the last great Orlof*, on the report of a legal commission, duly appointed, who reported it as the result of *mere accident! You* have grossly insulted *his friendless wife and child!* You have *refused* to make restitution to the orphan, whose *father* your secret partner *betrayed to shame*, and whose *mother* died of a broken heart, after your circle had ruined the *family fortunes!* Do you *still* refuse?" she said glaring at the door.

"*I defy you!* You can not touch *an acre!* You are powerless!" hissed Bradford, losing all self-control.

"I then *now* demand *a full share* of the property and dividends of the island mine for *each* interest I have spoken of; with an *accounting* of such shares from the time when you *began* to *work* the mine!" resolutely repeated Vera Narychkine, with a reassuring glance at suffering Olga Orlof. Arthur Randolph stood bewildered!

"You shall never have *a single cent!*" roughly ejaculated Bradford. "I am ready to break *this scene off!*"——

"*I am not!* I will *now* punish you for your dishonesty and insolence!" sternly said Vera, as she sharply touched the bell. "Ask Prince Narychkine to favor me with his company *instantly*, Serge!" she said, as she deliberately *opened* the paper, which seemed to send the thrills of an unknown fear through the stern bosom of defiant Bradford!

The radiant Minister, glittering in the splendor of his rank, entering quickly, gazed blankly at the disturbed faces before him! He had fancied the 'entente cordiale' to be of the very closest!——

"Will you kindly tell *this person*, Dimitri, if the document which *I hand you now* is veritable or not?" The lady's voice was icy cold!

"Most certainly! *Why—it is a*"——the Minister was wildly excited!

"*Never mind!* Just tell him if it is *veritable*, and leave us then *for a moment*, mon ami!" said Vera, in her sweetest, silky tones.

"It *is* a veritable document on which I would place the *Seal of the Legation*," the Minister gravely said, "if I were not forbidden to verify *the signature of His Majesty the Czar's official Private Secretary!*" He bowed gravely and retired, with a look of cold menace at Bradford, which brought a frosty smile to Vera Narychkine's lips! *Dimitri was a deadly duellist!*——

When the door closed, Madame Vera haughtily said, as she now faced Paul Bradford, with undisguised scorn:

"Her Imperial Majesty *the Czarina*, in answer to my prayer, obtained the grace from the Emperor of a free release of *the 'Emperor's tenth'* in these legally granted mines, *entered duly as the crown property*, by our laws, in favor of Madame Orlof and her heirs, and also to *Princess Irma Maxutoff*, to whom *her own share* is especially given as a dower *in view of her approaching marriage!*"——

Arthur Randolph staggered as he heard *these strange words* but Paul Bradford only stammered:

"And the Czar has then legally *recognized the patent?*"

He seemed to be dazed!——

"You will have *no trouble* in finding out the truth very soon, as I shall ask the Minister to officially file *this adjudicated Russian grant,* at the State Department, and *then* proceed against *you,* and *your associates,* in our *Russian Orphans' Court,* on behalf of the Princess Irma Maxutoff! Madame Orlof can speak *both* for *herself,* and as *Princess Maxutoff's legal guardian!*"——

"You will, undoubtedly, *find your carriage waiting,* sir! I *had* supposed that you were *open to the common claims of justice!*"——

And the fair ambassadress offered her arm to assist Countess Olga, as she rose to leave Bradford's loathsome presence. Randolph sprang forward to open the door!—

"*One word!*" pleaded Bradford, as he stood helplessly quivering now, in nameless fear! "*I will see our lawyers!* I will call *the company* together! Hold back your action! *I beg of you!* If this is true, *I will settle!*"——

With one glance of infinite contempt, Vera Narychkine passed, saying coldly:

"*You are too late, sir!* Madame Orlof is the legal guardian of the Princess Maxutoff! *I* shall never notice you again! *There is the man whom you will have to settle with!*"

And, as he staggered out to his carriage, Paul Bradford knew from the steely glitter of the artist's honest eyes, that he might hope for but little mercy! For the ladies, in leaving the room, had passed without even *one parting word!*

He was trapped in his own net at last!

"*My God! And my wife will be publicly disgraced!*" he muttered, as he saw the Legation doors close on them forever!

But the ambassadress had *bidden the millionairess a most cordial adieu!*——

Three weeks later, in the drawing rooms of the Czar's representative, Arthur Randolph sat sadly, facing pretty Madame Vera Narychkine, and strangely unmindful of the sweet earnest glances of the beautiful Madame Orlof, who was still pale and ill from the mental agitation of the night of the Legation Ball!

"*I am going back home to-morrow*," quietly said Arthur Randolph!—"You need *me* no more, and my studio duties call me *at once* homeward! If there is anything I can do abroad, you can command me! I had hoped to have Count Stephan bear me company, but I suppose he has extended that *elastic* leave of absence! The lawyers wrote me to-day that they have informed you of their acceptance of the cash and bonds offered to you both, in satisfaction of your interests! The funds are to be paid in through the Russian Legation, when the Minister certifies to the papers of the official agreement! For Bradford to have resisted your proofs further would have been only *madness! It has been a great victory!* And I am also told that Paul Bradford has suddenly left town, *for the west!* I am certainly free to return now to my land of *pictured shadows!* I will call and say 'Good-bye' to Princess Irma *to-morrow!* I am very busy to-day,—with the preparations for my departure!"—

His voice seemed strangely changed,—for *in his heart of hearts* lurked a sadness which even *he* could not control!

"The Empress had presented her share of the Imperial tenth, *as a wedding present*, to Irma, the little Princess of Alaska!"

So it was all settled!—*And it rang the knell of his hopes!*

"Ah! *De Ribeaupierre* will be the very happiest man in Russia!" he thought, as he rose, in some constraint. There was a silence, and the lovely women's eyes met!——

"You are *surely* not going to *leave us so*, Arthur?" cried

the loveliest of guardian Countesses, as she rose, her bosom heaving *in some strange unwonted emotion!* "I wished to give *you a little reminder* of your loyal and gallant devotion to *me*, a friendless mother, and to the *orphaned girl*, whom you have battled for *so* faithfully these *many* long *years!* I hope that you will not refuse me!"

Arthur Randolph's heart swelled in silent sorrow!—

The young man stood waiting, his head bowed in sombre thought, while Vera Narychkine sternly eyed him, *in a strange silence!* A light step at his side caused him to look up in quick surprise, as Countess Olga placed the slender hand of the Princess of Alaska in his own!—

"I wished to make you a *little present*, Arthur!—*It is this!*—And," she smiled, "*I can give you a clear title!*"—

THE END.

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